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WIDE AWAKE

A COMPLETE STORY **WEEKLY.** EVERY WEEK.

IN THE SULTAN'S EYE;
OR, BEATING THE PORTE'S GAME. *By TOM DAWSON.*



"Get back, you Moslem rats!" warned Tod Eastman, facing the palace guards, pistol in hand. Phil and Bo'sun Bill staggered on with the trunk. Boom! went the palace bell. "That means a whole battalion of Turkish infantry to face!" gasped Phil.

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In the Sultan's Eye

OR,

BEATING THE PORTE'S GAME

By TOM DAWSON

CHAPTER I.

THE PLOT FOR MILLIONS.

The boys sat, just off the sidewalk, in the cafe of the Hotel de Byzance, Constantinople.

Though neither was past seventeen, one knew well what it meant to hustle hard in the world.

The other, somewhat taller and decidedly better dressed, was the son of the heir to a great fortune.

That these youngsters were either English or American was apparent at a glance.

As soon as they began talking, their speech at once decided it that they were Americans.

"I wish with all my heart you were going back to the United States with us, Tod, spoke the taller and better-dressed boy, with something of a sigh.

Tod Eastman smiled, a bit sadly.

"I guess you've got the impression, haven't you, Phil, that I'm traveling on my money?"

"Why, yes; aren't you?" cried Phil Granger, opening his eyes in some surprise.

"In a way, I suppose I am," grinned Tod. "That is, it's my money that I'm spending on this trip. But there's precious little more money back of it."

"Too bad, old chap," Phil cried sympathetically. "What's the matter? Your father failed in business?"

"He's been dead over ten years," Tod replied, slowly. "I don't even remember my mother. My aunt, my only

living relative, kept a lodging house on one of the side streets of East Side New York. She died, and the place was sold for next to nothing. Some five hundred and forty dollars. That was all my fortune when I left New York."

"Thunder!" gasped Phil. "And you had the nerve to go traveling on that?"

"Not traveling for pleasure, I can tell you," Tod returned. "I'm on my way to China, to see if I can't find a job as chemist at one of the ports."

"Chemist?" repeated Phil. "At your age?"

"Well, why not?" challenged Tod, almost defiantly. "I've been two years at the work, and the professor said I had learned more at it than most fellows would in four. I've got the professor's endorsement in my baggage. It ought to land me a job."

"And you've been two years in college, at your age, and I'm not even ready for college yet?" asked Phil Granger, wonderingly.

"Oh, it was the college of pharmacy," Tod explained, smilingly. "I thought I was through with school, and looked for a job, for Aunt Emeline was hard up. They wanted a boy at the college of pharmacy laboratory and I got the job. I had to work around the laboratory. It didn't take me three days to find out that I liked chemistry better than any other business on earth. The professor found it out, too, and he gave me a chance to learn. It wasn't six months before I was one of the regular assistants in the laboratory, with my pay raised.

"Last year I was getting forty dollars a month as one of the regular assistants. I could have had fifty this year, but Professor Dole said there were big chances for chemists in China these days, and he advised me to go there. I've got letters from him which describe me as a good analytical chemist."

Phil Granger gazed in wonder at this boy of his own age who could do such things.

"Well, you're a wonder, Tod Eastman!" he cried.

"If I am," laughed Tod, good-humoredly, "it doesn't hurt."

"You haven't got a swelled head, that's certain," Phil admitted, admiringly.

"If I had, Professor Dole told me a bully way to get over the swelled head."

"What is that?"

"Why, Phil," laughed the other boy, "if you ever feel it coming on, just hunt up somebody who knows a heap more than you do and watch him."

"So you're going to China? To hustle!"

"I've got a notion, Phil, that you've never had to hustle," hinted the other boy.

"I? No. It would have done me more good, I suppose, if I had. It looked, for a while, as if I'd have to all right. You've told me so much about yourself, Tod, that fair-play ought to call for me to do the same."

These two boys had known each other but little more than twenty-four hours.

Travelers in the East, however, learn to form new friendships rapidly. This is even more true when the travelers happen to be young.

Tod had been in Constantinople a week. He had come here because he had hoped that there might be some chance for him.

Satisfied that there was not, he only waited his chance to take the next steamer that would carry him on to Hong Kong.

They had met the day before. Phil, out alone, and not understanding a word of the language, had gotten into some simple difficulty with a "cavass," or policeman of Constantinople.

Phil, with the notion that the policeman was imposing on him, might have gotten into serious trouble.

But Tod had happened along. With the few score of Arabic words that he had picked up in a week he managed to explain matters to the cavass, at the same time slipping a silver franc into the Turk's hand.

From that moment the two American boys had chummed it together through the capital city of the Turk.

The Grangers were stopping at the Hotel de Byzance; Tod was putting up at the cheaper Hotel de France.

So far Tod had not seen the other members of Phil's family. In fact, our hero did not know just how numerous the Granger party might be.

"Four months ago I thought I'd have to hustle for fair," Phil went on. "Dad failed in business, and I thought Flo—that's my sister—and I would have to go to work sure.

We were wondering what we could do, for neither of us knew how to earn a cent.

"Just then Dad got a letter from his old friend, Mortimer Hudson. Mr. Hudson had come out here to Turkey years before, and had made a fortune, most of which he had 'salted down' in New York. Mr. Hudson had a notion that his days were few, and he wanted to see Dad and the rest of us before he died. Mr. Hudson had heard of Dad's failure, so he sent a liberal bunch of cash for us to travel on.

"Of course, we came out to this part of the world at once. Mortimer Hudson was really dying. He had no relative in the world, except a brother, Richard. Dick Hudson is a regular, all-around no-good. That's a bit too mild, but we'll let it go at that.

"Mortimer Hudson made his will, after we got here, leaving everything to Dad. That fortune amounts to about two million dollars, in good old securities salted down in New York. Dad's got the will, and Dick Hudson, who is a played-out, cold-blooded man of the world, and about forty years old, is left out of the will altogether."

"Is he in this part of the world—Dick Hudson?" asked Tod, between half-closed eyes.

"He's right here in Constantinople at this moment," Phil rejoined. "He stays at the Hotel d'Angleterre. He's frantic, of course, but he can't help himself. The will gives every cent to Dad; and, besides, that will gives the best of good reasons why Dick Hudson isn't remembered in it."

"Then I can imagine," remarked Tod Eastman, "that this fellow, Dick Hudson, would give a good deal to get hold of the will."

"Why?" questioned Phil.

"So he could destroy it."

"What good would that do him?"

"You say Dick Hudson is Mortimer Hudson's only near relative?"

"Yes."

"Then," pursued our hero, "if that will were destroyed, Dick Hudson, as the dead man's brother, would inherit everything."

"That may be so," nodded Phil.

"It is so!"

"I don't know much about such matters," replied Phil, indifferently.

"If anything happens that that will is destroyed before it gets to the Probate Court, your father won't get a dollar," warned Tod, in a low voice.

Phil started, then looked reassured.

"Oh, it's all right," he spoke, confidently. "The will and some other papers are in a small trunk, or box, down at the Customs House. This is a queer country, where your baggage not only has to be searched when you come into the country, but when you go out of it as well."

"I know," nodded Tod. "But that box is being guarded, isn't it?"

"Why, Dad is down there, now, getting all our baggage through, for our steamer sails in the morning. When he

gets it through he'll take it all aboard a caique (harbor row-boat) and get it aboard the ship. The trunk with the will and other papers he'll put, of course, in the purser's safe, where it will be O K."

"Good!" nodded Tod. "You're right. It isn't often that a thief succeeds in getting anything out of the purser's safe on one of the great ocean steamers."

"So I fancy the papers will be all safe," yawned Phil. "But let's talk about yourself, Tod. I'm awfully sorry we've got to part in the morning. I wonder if Dad couldn't find something for you in the United States?"

"I don't want it," spoke Tod, promptly. "I thank you, Phil, but the biggest chances in these days are out in the Orient, so that's where I'm headed."

On this sultry night there were few in the cafe, beyond the half dozen dirty, weary-looking waiters.

As was stated before, the boys sat at a table just inside from the sidewalk. Each had a bottle of a temperance beverage known as lemon squash on the table before him.

The sidewalk, if the ragged, dirty, badly paved affair had any right to the name, was on one side of the Grand Rue de Pera, on the hill of Pera. The street and the quarter are the most imposing in Constantinople proper. It is here that the hotels and the clubs of the foreigners are found.

To-night, owing to the great and sultry heat, there were few foreigners stirring.

The dogs, which abound in throngs in every portion of Constantinople, had the streets almost entirely to themselves at this hour—ten o'clock.

The howling of scores of these wild, homeless dogs was, in fact, about the only sound that could be heard near the Hotel de Byzance.

"It's getting about time for Dad to be back here," spoke Phil, suddenly, and with anxiety in his tone. "Thunder! I hope nothing has happened to him."

"Constantinople is pretty safe in these days," declared Tod. "Besides, at this hour, your father will be sure to take a carriage back."

"If he can find one."

At this moment the clatter of a horse's hoofs and the shouts of a driver were heard below them on the hill.

Then a quaint, little, old-fashioned affair of a coupe rattled up to the entrance of the hotel, just below this open front of the cafe.

"If that's Dad," propounded Phil, without looking, "he'll come in here. I told him I wanted to introduce you to him."

"Why, I shall be delighted to meet your father," promised Tod Eastman.

In another moment the side door of the cafe was pushed open, and a haggard, white-faced man fairly staggered in.

"Why, that's Dad!" uttered Phil, gasping. "What on earth——"

The boy leaped up from his seat, ran across the marble floor of the cafe, and caught his father in his arms, just as the latter would have fallen to the floor.

"In this chair, Dad!" flushed Phil, letting his parent down into the nearest seat. "Waiter!"

"What are you going to do?" almost sternly demanded Tod, who had followed his new friend.

"Order some liquor," explained Phil. "My father needs it."

"Don't you do it," advised Tod, solemnly. "Booze never cured any sickness yet!"

"I don't—want—liquor," moaned Mr. Granger, faintly. "Oh, Phil—the trunk! The will!"

"What's wrong, Dad?" Phil demanded, his face now almost as white as his father's.

"The Turkish customs officers seized that box!" moaned Hiram Granger.

"Seized it?" gasped Phil, while Tod looked on keenly, taking in every word.

"Yes!" came the faint answer.

"What did they seize it for, Dad?"

"They said it—contained—treasonable papers."

"Rot!" faltered Phil.

"But they seized it, just the same, my boy," murmured the old man, brokenly, after sipping some water from a glass that Tod held to his lips. "They've taken the box over to the Turkish minister of revenue. Oh, Phil, if anything happens to that will——!"

Hiram Granger did not finish the sentence.

Falling forward, he slipped out of the chair altogether, and struck hard on the marble floor, where he lay as if life had fled.

"Is he dead?" gasped Phil, in an awe-struck voice, looking up at the young chemist with eyes full of piteous entreaty.

"No, he's not dead," replied Tod, himself going to his knees and feeling of the old man's pulse.

But our hero added to himself:

"I won't be surprised if Phil's father is dead before morning."

Aloud, our hero asked:

"Has your father ever had attacks of heart trouble?"

"I never knew him to have one, Tod."

"He's got one now, I'm afraid," whispered our hero to himself.

"What shall we do, old fellow?" groaned Phil, who, in trouble, turned instinctively to this new friend.

"Do?" repeated Tod. "We must carry him upstairs to his room at once. Send one of these waiters for the nearest doctor. Doctors are thick here on Pera Hill."

A waiter was promptly despatched on the errand.

Other waiters brought a door, to which the suffering, unconscious man was lifted. On this crude stretcher Hiram Granger was carried up the stairs to his own rooms.

A sparkingly pretty girl of sixteen opened the door at their knock.

Then, in an instant, her face went as white and haggard as her father's.

Tod got only that first glimpse at the girl's face. Then

he did not look at her again, but aided the others in placing unconscious Mr. Granger on the nearest bed.

The doctor came hurriedly. He applied some remedy, then added that all he could order was great quiet.

"Phil," whispered Tod, gripping his friend's arm.

"Well?" queried young Granger, his eyes full of trouble as he turned to his friend.

"Describe Dick Hudson to me."

"Tall; maybe six feet. Very thin, but strong nevertheless. Hair and moustache black, but slightly grizzled with gray. Face much seamed, and hard-looking. A cold, grayish-blue eye. Rather swell dresser, and always wears a three-stone diamond ring on the third finger of his left hand. Parts his hair in the middle——"

"That's enough, Phil. Thank you."

"Why do you ask all this?" demanded young Granger, wonderingly.

"Tell you a little later, Phil. I'm going out now. In twenty minutes you may find me waiting for you in the corridor."

Tod did not hurry from the room. He did not make any noise in going, but seemed, rather, simply to vanish.

But Phil Granger, looking out into the corridor some twenty minutes later, found Tod there, a strange light shining in our hero's eyes.

Phil closed the door softly, then tiptoed toward Eastman.

"How's your father?" whispered Tod.

"Resting. Doctor says he thinks he can bring him through if there's no new excitement."

"Then, old fellow, we must keep every bit of the excitement from your father," vibrated Tod.

"Of course. But what makes you look so strange, Tod?"

"Phil, I've just seen Dick Hudson!"

"Eh?"

"Of course I went on purpose to see him?"

"Why?"

"Dick Hudson," pursued our hero, "didn't know that I was watching him. So I got a good, square look at him."

"What does this all mean?" blurted Phil.

"Guess! Phil, Dick Hudson is in the cafe at the Angleterre. He's alone, smoking a good deal, but not drinking. There's a strange light in his eyes. Yet of one thing I'm satisfied. He's wholly pleased with himself to-night!"

"What's the meaning of all this riddle?" quavered Phil Granger.

"Phil, if the will is lost, Dick Hudson gets the fortune, doesn't he?"

"Good heavens, yes!"

"Then, if he's so pleased to-night, he must have heard that your father has lost possession of the will."

"But that was seized by the Turkish customs officers," protested young Granger. "Dick Hudson doesn't know them."

"Your father told us the box containing the will had been taken to the palace of the minister of revenues."

"Yes, but Hudson doesn't know the minister of revenues, either."

"How do you know he doesn't?"

Tod shot the question out plumply. Pausing, an instant, for an answer that Phil didn't make, our hero went on, warmly:

"Phil Granger, every public official in Turkey can be bought, if the price is high enough. Phil, I'd bet a big sum, if I had it, that Dick Hudson knows just what has happened—for the very simple reason that Hudson bribed the minister of revenues to do this very trick!"

Phil staggered back, groping at the wall.

"You really—think so?" he gasped, slowly.

"There isn't anything else to think," Tod crisped.

"Then, what——"

"I don't know what's to be done, Phil! Neither do you. There's only one man in Constantinople that we can trust to tell us straight."

"Who?"

"The American minister! The ambassador!" shot out Tod. "The representative of the American Government here in Constantinople. He can help you, if anyone can, and it's his business to do it."

"When can I see him? Now?"

"I don't know," Tod retorted, bluntly. "But, Phil, there ought to be no time lost. You and I ought to get a carriage, sedan chairs, saddle horses, or something, and set off at once. Can you be spared here?"

"Wait. I'll see."

On tip-toe Phil went back into the sick-room.

In a moment he was out again.

"Dad's sleeping, and Flo is with him. Come on. Let us hurry."

Outside the hotel, at this hour of the night, there were no carriages or other conveyances.

"We'll go a bit down this Grand Rue de Pera," proposed Tod. "We're sure to find something soon."

Past two or three street corners they hurried, still looking for a conveyance.

Then, suddenly, from down in the depths of one of the narrow, crooked little streets that lead off from the Grand Rue de Pera they heard a great, hearty voice roar in English:

"Shove off, ye lubbers! The Stars and Stripes forever!"

Tod halted, instantly, listening and peering down into the darkness of that unlighted street.

"Some American sailor having an argument with the natives," he grimaced.

Phil hesitated, between a sense of his own troubles and the desire to go to the aid of a fellow-American in that strange, dangerous land.

"Cast off, ye dogs!" came another lusty bellow, in the same big voice.

"Dogs?" shivered Tod. "If there's one word of English that every Turk in Constantinople knows the meaning of,

it's that word, 'dog.' And a Moslem considers 'dog' the worst insult he can receive from a Christian!"

"Back, ye dogs, afore I lay yer heads open!" roared that same big, positive voice.

There was the sound of a blow.

"Trouble!" palpatated Tod. "Sure!"

"And a countryman of ours," panted Phil. "We've just got to mix in!"

If Tod had had a single, fleeting doubt of his new friend, that settled it!

Tod, himself, loved the bright face of danger. More than that, the worship of the Stars and Stripes amounted, with him, almost to a mania.

Now that Phil was of the same cast, Tod knew, in an instant, that their friendship was cemented forever.

"Come on!" implored Phil.

But Tod was already running swiftly down the dark street:

The two boys fairly raced to where they saw a mass of dark, struggling humanity.

"Knives, eh, ye cowards?" roared the sailor's big, scornful voice.

Tod, slightly in the lead, saw the flash of steel as he rushed down to the spot where one big, broad-shouldered, middle-aged man in sea togs, backed against the wall of a building, was holding his own.

It was the foremost assailant, a typical specimen of the Constantinople street rough, who plunged at the sailor with a knife whose blade was at least a foot long.

But the sailor, quick as a cat, closed in under the Turk's guard.

He caught the man with the knife, raised him high in a twinkling, and hurled the rascal over the heads of his fellows.

Chug! The assassin's head struck against the wall opposite, as the knife cluttered to the sidewalk.

But it was picked up in a flash by another of the half-dozen remaining assailants.

"Come on, ye pups, ye dogs!" roared the sailor, bracing himself to stand an attack in which three or four knives now gleamed.

"You've got help, partner!" cried Tod, leaping at one of the Turks from behind.

In an instant Tod had floored the fellow, taking away from him an ugly-looking dagger.

Phil, with a dandy foot-ball tackle, had ducked in, seizing another around the hips, raising him and dropping him.

Thump! thump! thump! The big sailor, thus reinforced, fairly waded into the crowd with his sledge-hammer blows.

In a twinkling each of the three Americans had possessed himself of a Turkish knife.

Only one miscreant, flourishing his knife high over his head, got away. He ran as fast as he could go, vanishing into the darkness, leaving half a dozen men stretched on the street, four of them stunned and the other two afraid

to rise while that big, hard-hitting sailor danced about among them.

"Partner!" clicked Tod. "You'd better get out of here as quick as lightning. We've got to get, too."

The fellow who had escaped was shouting loudly from the distance.

Now, as the three Americans hurried breathlessly toward the Grand Rue de Pera they saw two Turkish policemen turn the corner.

"Blocked!" quivered Tod. "Now, we need all our wits."

"You will halt and let us see what has been done here," ordered one cavass, as both drew their short, curved swords.

Trapped in Constantinople!

It is no fine situation for a foreigner, in a city of Moslem fanatics!

CHAPTER II.

"MR. BACHSHEESH!"

For just an instant the sailor-man looked as if he preferred to finish up a good job by giving these policemen a trouncing, too.

But from behind them, up the dark street, came the yells of a Turkish rabble hastily gathered.

"It seems there has been strange trouble here," spoke one cavass.

Only Tod, of the Americans, fathomed what he was talking about.

"What does this fellow with the butcher's knife want?" questioned the sailor.

"The police are holding us while they investigate the trouble," our hero explained.

"Oh, Lord!" shivered Phil.

"Shall we lick the police sharks, too?" demanded the sailor.

"My friend," Tod retorted, grimly, "we can't thrash all Turkey. We have got to face the music, now that we've had our fun. But, at least, these policemen will protect us from the mob."

And now the mob was all about them, shouting, cursing, gesturing, making frantic efforts to get at these daring Americans.

But the Turkish police, with their drawn swords, and re-enforced by two more policemen, drove the mob back.

"Come," said the cavass who appeared to be in authority, "we will take you infidel dogs back down the street and see what you have done."

"Submit, partner," whispered Tod, to the sailor, whose fists were doubling. "It's the only thing left to do now."

Down the dark street they were marched, preceded and followed by the howling Turkish mob.

Dogs at nearby corners took up the racket, adding their howls and yelps to the commotion.

"It seems I've got ye into serious trouble, mess-mates," observed the sailor, sorrowfully.

"It doesn't matter—now," replied Tod. "You'd do as much for any other chap who gave a Yankee yell in this strange port."

"Wouldn't I, though?" growled the sailor.

Now they were halted, while the police surveyed the four men who had been knocked out.

The mob howled some more, clamoring that these four fellow-Moslems were dead—slain by the dogs of infidels.

"Do you want my account of this affair?" asked Tod, turning to the leader of the police party.

"Save it for the *cadi*" (judge), growled the *cavass*.

"That shows where we stand," grimaced Tod, turning to his comrades. "If we don't get help from somewhere these police mean to soak it to us."

Instead of taking the three American prisoners up into the Grand Rue de Pera, where they would have some chance to appeal to fellow-countrymen, the police hustled their captives down the steep hill through streets that were no more than narrow alleys.

But, at one corner a voice off in the darkness asked in English:

"I say, friends, how can I help you?"

"If you know where these fellows are taking us," Tod responded, quickly, "hurry off to the office of the American consul-general and beg him to hurry after us."

"I'll do it, by Jove!"

The police halted, glancing off in the darkness with suspicion of this invisible speaker of English.

Many of the roughs in the mob made a dash off after the unseen one.

Three minutes later the three Americans were dragged through the portals of the nearest police station.

First, they were taken into what seemed to be an office. There, with his feet on a table, sat a Turk dressed in a somewhat European type of uniform.

He questioned the policemen briefly, hurriedly. The policemen answered so rapidly that Tod, with his limited knowledge of the language, could not understand what was being said.

"If you command these police," appealed our hero, at last, "won't you allow me to state the case for our party?"

"Away with them," growled the police official.

Without another chance at an explanation they were hustled out and down a corridor.

Through a narrow doorway they were hustled into a room, foul and damp, and perhaps ten feet square.

Clang! An iron door had been slammed to on them.

"Jugged!" shivered Phil.

"In the brig!" uttered the sailor, grimly.

"And maybe for longer than we'll like the notion of," uttered Tod, sighing.

"All on my account, too, messmates!" gulped the sailor, sadly. "Boys, I'm sorry!"

"Not a word of that kind," protested Tod, quickly, resting a hand in kindly fashion on one of the big sailor's broad shoulders. "You didn't understand what a dangerous thing it is to call a Turk a dog—that's all."

"Was that what brought on all this row?" queried the sailor, aghast.

"That cinched it," smiled Tod. "Still, there might have been trouble, anyway."

"It's tough, ain't it?" gulped Phil, looking all but ready to cry. "Now, what's to become of Dad's business?"

"We'll hope to get out of this, by daylight," hinted Tod.

"How?" demanded both his comrades, in a breath.

"Why, if the Turks have cooled down by morning, we'll suggest to the *cadi*—that's the judge, in this land, and he holds court out of doors—we'll suggest to the *cadi* that he let us off with a fair-sized fine. The fine slips into the *cadi*'s pocket, anyway, and never strikes the Sultan's treasury."

"Buy our way out of the scrape?" cried Phil, jubilantly. "Why, that'll be easy, after all. I've got nearly eight hundred francs in a money-belt next to my skin."

"For heaven's sake, don't show it," begged Tod. "If you do, they'll order us beheaded and go through our clothes after we're dead. No, no! We mustn't offer a fine of more than twenty francs apiece, or we'll make the *cadi* and all the police too greedy."

"But will the *cadi* be sure to take the money?" asked Phil, tremulously.

"I reckon," Tod rejoined, "that that will depend a good deal on the temper of the fellows that we licked so stiff to-night. If they come here, with a crowd at their backs, bellowing for our scalps, then the *cadi* won't dare take a bribe from us. But if the *cadi* is left to run things himself, he'll take our money. You can buy any government official in Turkey—and most of 'em mighty cheap at that."

"Messmates," broke in the big sailor, in a sorrowful voice, "maybe ye've got a right to know who the worthless hulk is that you ran on to to-night and wrecked yourselves on. I hain't got much of a name—jest Bill Hospur—that's all. Bo'sun of the American tramp steamer Archibald. Like most bo'suns I don't let rum get the upper hand of me, but, like most Yankee bo'suns, I don't know how to hold back at a fight. If the good Lord ever sends a fight of your'n my way, I'll handle it hard for ye, and that's the most I can say by way of apology."

He held out both hands to our young friends, with a suspicion of tears in his big, bright eyes.

"We don't want any apology," cried Tod, heartily. "But here's hoping that we find a way to get out of this scrape as easily as we got into it."

Phil and Tod speedily introduced themselves to Bo'sun Bill, whom they rightly judged to be about as hearty and reliable an old tar as sails under the American flag in these days.

For half an hour these new friends spun yarns together. Then something happened.

Down the corridor came the tread of feet.

Next, before the cell door, stood the Turkish official, a *cavass*, and a third man, who beyond any doubt, looked like an American.

"Do you claim to be American citizens, you three?" demanded the American out in the corridor.

"We certainly do!" clicked Tod.

"I am Seabury, the American consul-general at Constantinople. A few minutes ago I received an abrupt visit from an excited young Englishman, who directed me to come here."

"If you're the American consul," cried Tod, his eyes brightening, "then may heaven reward the young Englishman!"

The consul spoke a few low-toned words to the Turkish official, who gave a grunt, and a sign to the cavass behind him.

That policeman produced a key with which he unlocked the cell-door.

"Are we free, Mr. Seabury?" demanded Tod, eagerly.

"That remains to be seen," replied the American consul, drily. "We are going to the office, now, to see if the thing can be fixed up."

The three prisoners followed their conductors down the corridor, back into the same office.

The solitary cavass withdrew from the room, stationing himself out by the street.

"Now, tell me your story," desired the consul. "And tell it straight at the same time."

He did not look wholly eager in the matter. Perhaps this consul had been roused from his first nap of the night.

But Tod, by dint of some help from Phil and Bo'sun Bill, told the story briefly, glibly.

Then the consul began to talk, in Arabic, to the police official.

That solemn-looking Turk shook his head at frequent intervals.

"The Turk isn't impressed with our version of the thing," Tod whispered to Phil.

But, presently, the consul turned and led his three fellow-countrymen aside.

"I think this thing can be fixed," he whispered, "if you're ready to pay a little money."

"Sixty francs enough?" propounded Tod Eastman.

"A little bit small, for such an affair as this," replied the consul, dubiously. "You see, your accusers, who'll swear to anything at all with clear consciences, have made out a serious charge of attempted murder against all three of you. It might result in your getting sent away for years."

"But sixty francs is all we've got," argued Tod. "Shall we try it?"

"Try it, by all means," advised the American consul. "After you've offered the money, I'll back it up with all the talk I can command as American consul-general."

"Let me have the cash," whispered Tod. "It's a case of our old friend, Mr. Backsheesh."

In Turkey, all tips, all bribes, all blackmail money are extorted under the name of "backsheesh."

The waiter boldly asks for "backsheesh." The beggar in the street whines for "backsheesh." The merchant, after a sale, and when he is handing back the change to

the foreign buyer, murmurs the word, "backsheesh" for any old thing—and often for nothing at all!

Back in the cell Phil had gone into his money-belt for notes representing sixty francs.

This money he now passed to our hero, who stepped, alone, over to where the official sat, smoking a cigarette and staring out through a window.

"The American consul tells me this matter can be arranged," whispered Tod.

"Backsheesh!" replied the Turk, staring stolidly at the boy.

"Here, most excellent friend," hinted Tod, pressing the notes into the open left hand of the police official.

That worthy, thrusting his cigarette between his teeth, coolly spread the notes over one leg, counting them.

Then he looked up, with an air of scorn.

"Backsheesh!" was all he said, but there was a world of meaning in his tone.

"It's all we happen to have," Tod urged.

"Backsheesh!" stolidly insisted the official, tucking the notes into a pocket and again holding forth the open hand.

"We have no more," Tod urged, in a slightly louder voice.

"Now, let me have him," urged the American consul, stepping forward, nudging our hero's arm.

Tod willingly enough stepped forward.

For some minutes consul and Turk argued, rapidly, forcefully.

Presently, without looking around, the consul called over his shoulder:

"You three walk softly and slowly toward the street door. As soon as you get outside, wait for me."

This the three prisoners did.

The cavass on guard at the street door eyed them curiously, but said nothing.

Soon Consul-General Seabury came hurrying out.

"There, I've got you off," he grunted. "Whew! But you fighting Yankees give me more work in this town than all other duties combined!"

"At least," hinted Tod, "I trust that every American thanks you as heartily as we do."

"Humph!" growled Seabury. "How did you come to get into this scrape, anyway?"

"Well, as for Granger and myself," Tod replied, seeing his chance, "we were on our way to find the American minister."

"A long road you started to travel," gruffed the consul. "The American minister, Mr. Steadman, is out at his country residence, miles from here. But what on earth did you want to see him about?"

"Why, perhaps we'd better tell you right now, if you've the time to listen," suggested Tod, after a swift look at Phil.

"I've always got time to listen to the troubles of Americans," grimaced the consul. "That's all I'm for."

As they walked along Mr. Seabury listened gravely to the hurried account Tod gave him of the seizure, at the

customs house, of the box containing that wonderfully important will that meant a fortune.

"This is a pretty big and serious matter," said the consul, very gravely.

"I know it is," Tod retorted. "That is why we set out to get expert advice for our guidance."

"Now, of course, you can't go out to the American minister's residence at this late hour of the night," declared the consul. "You'll have to wait until morning, anyway. Now, what I suggest is that you come to the consulate in the morning. We are at least civilized enough to have a few telephones in Constantinople. I have one to Mr. Steadman's country residence. Come to me at ten o'clock, and we'll get the American ambassador over the 'phone. We'll tell him what's up, and see what his answer is."

They came, now, to the building of the American consulate-general.

In the center of this place was a great courtyard.

Here Seabury left his visitors until he could send for a carriage for them.

"Now, get under your roofs before you have chance for more trouble," was Seabury's parting advice, as he shook hands with them.

They followed it, all three. Tod took Bo'sun Bill to his own room at the Hotel de France.

There, at eight in the morning, our hero left the sailor in possession of his room.

Hiring a carriage—one of the few that there are in the Turkish capital, Tod was taken to the Hotel de Byzance.

Eastman found Phil speedily. The latter looked as if he had not slept, which was, indeed, the truth.

"My father is resting quietly," Phil reported. "We are not to be allowed to bother him about anything today."

"Then you can spare the time to go to the consulate?"

"Spare the time?" grunted Phil. "Whew, I've got to, with two million dollars at stake!"

"Eaten yet?"

"No."

"Then eat," ordered Tod, taking command in the way that was natural to his energetic nature.

They descended to that same cafe in which they had sat the night before. Phil ordered a breakfast, and attempted to eat it.

"In this new trouble, I don't know what I'd do if it wasn't for you, Tod," cried Phil, gratefully.

"You've never been used to managing; that's all. You'll learn," Tod replied, cheerfully.

Breakfast over, they drove rapidly to the American consulate.

Here they "got" Mr. Steadman on the wire. It was Tod, of course, who did the talking.

Ambassador Steadman, after listening, replied that in a country like Turkey this might be a difficult matter to arrange.

Nevertheless, he said, he would send Mr. Grimshaw, one of the secretaries of the embassy, to the consulate at once.

Mr. Grimshaw would do whatever was possible.

Then ensued a two hours' wait, until Grimshaw's carriage could get in from the suburbs.

Grimshaw was a polished, energetic-looking young man of about twenty-four.

"It's as I supposed," he announced. "We'll have to go over to Stamboul and see Ali Deba."

"Who's he?" queried Tod.

"The Sultan's Minister of Revenues—the chap who has charge of the customs houses of the empire. It's to Ali Deba, I understand, that the seized box was sent last night."

Inside of two minutes more Secretary Grimshaw was leading in his carriage, that of the two American boys following.

They traveled over the bridge that crosses the Golden Horn, a narrow body of water that separates Stamboul from Constantinople.

It is in Stamboul that the Sultan's principal palace is, and here, also, are the palaces of his ministers.

Inside of twenty minutes the American party drew up before the official residence of the Minister of Revenues.

It is an imposing-looking building, as it needed to be, since inside this building were vaults that contained millions of the Sultan's treasures.

The guard of soldiers on duty at the gate saluted at sight of the American coat-of-arms on the panels of Secretary Grimshaw's carriage.

The two carriages passed into a courtyard.

"Follow me," directed the secretary, and led them past more saluting soldiers inside the palace.

Here, in a great ante-room, well filled by soldiers and police and clerks, Grimshaw stated his business to an official.

"Now we'll have to wait anywhere from five minutes to a week," grumbled the secretary, as he led the young Americans to a seat.

It required a wait of a little more than an hour before they were shown into an office that was reached only by passing through two long corridors and past at least a score of sentries.

Then they were shown into a great, office-like room.

At a low, broad table, well covered with papers, sat Ali Deba.

At the first glance Tod did not like the looks of the man. He was low-browed, and had low, cunning eyes.

Leaving the boys behind at some distance, Grimshaw went forward and talked with the Turkish minister.

Once Ali Deba clapped his hands, and a turbanned attendant glided over to his master and salaamed—that is, bowed very low.

Then this turbanned one stole out of the room, but quickly returned with a paper, which he handed to his master.

Ali Deba glanced at the sheet, then held it out to Grimshaw.

The latter turned and beckoned to the two young Americans.

"Make your best bow to his excellency," whispered Secretary Grimshaw, as the two boys reached him.

This the two boys did. Then Ali Deba, after a look at Mr. Grimshaw, said, in excellent English:

"His excellency the secretary has explained your business to me. I have sent for a report on what was found in the box you describe. It appears that the box contained no such paper as you describe—nothing, in short, except a few documents that appear to be treasonable to the government of the Porte."

"No will found, your excellency?" quivered Tod Eastman.

"A will?" repeated Ali Deba, solemnly. "Nothing of the sort was found."

The eyes of Phil and Tod turned to Secretary Grimshaw.

"What is to be done?" young Eastman whispered.

"Nothing more," replied the secretary, slowly. "We have the assurance of the Sultan's government that no will was in the box."

CHAPTER III.

"FIVE MILLION FRANCS!"

Phil Granger was mutely miserable, speechless, as the three gained the courtyard again.

Not so with Tod.

"It's a blamed, infernal outrage!" quivered our hero.

"That's just what it is," agreed young Mr. Grimshaw.

"But what are we going to do about it?"

"Nothing, that I can see," replied the secretary from the American embassy, sadly. "You see, we have the word from the Sultan's government that no such will was found. We can't call the Minister of Revenues a liar."

"Neither were any treasonable documents found in the box," blazed Tod.

"Of course not," agreed Grimshaw, with a shrug of his shoulders. "But his excellency the minister, if challenged, would be able to fake up such documents and show them."

"And nothing can be done?" persisted Tod.

"No," declared Grimshaw. "Oh, this is all part and parcel of the lying, the fraud, the deceit and the trickery we have to put up with all the time from the Sultan's government. A hundred times a year I wish the American navy would blow Turkey off the map."

Then Grimshaw looked more serious.

"Perhaps I'm talking more than is wise," he went on grimly. "At all events, gentlemen, I'm sorry to say that I can't do anything more for you without instructions. Later, call Mr. Steadman up on the telephone from the consulate and see what my chief may have to say."

Grimshaw's carriage coming up at this moment, Grimshaw jumped into it and was whirled away.

But where was the hired carriage of the boys?

While they still waited for it, the turbanned attendant from the office of Ali Deba strode toward them.

He made a half-mocking salaam, then murmured:

"If you wish to see his excellency Ali Deba again, I think he will see you."

"Eh?" queried Tod, as the two boys looked at each other meaningly. "Then lead us back into his excellency's presence."

They got as far as the ante-room once more. But here, chafing and grumbling, they waited more than two hours ere Ali Deba sent out word that he would see one of them.

"Why not both of us?" demanded Tod.

"Only one," replied the turbanned Turk, smilingly.

"You go, then, Tod, old fellow," begged Phil. "You can handle the matter better than I could."

Stiffening, straightening up, Tod followed the turbanned one into the presence of Ali Deba.

The minister of the Sultan gazed at the boy for some moments through his half-closed eyelids.

"So it is very important that that document, the will, be found?" asked Ali Deba, at last.

"Very important, your excellency."

"How important?" persisted the minister, with a meaningful smile.

"I—I fear I do not understand your excellency," stammered Tod.

"The possession of that will, as I understand it, is worth ten million francs to one of two possessors," hinted Ali Deba.

"Two million dollars; yes, your excellency, that is the same as ten million francs," Tod agreed.

"Then the possession of that paper would be worth ten million dollars to your friend?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"Or—worth the same amount to your friend's enemy?"

Tod started, but admitted:

"Even so, your excellency."

"So that," pursued Ali Deba, "if that paper could be found, it should be worth half the amount for the person who finds the paper."

"What!" gasped Tod.

"I will make myself plainer, then," went on his excellency, smiling still.

From under his desk he kicked out a small trunk. Reaching down, he raised the lid and took from it a paper.

"Is this the will?" asked the Minister of Revenues, smiling wickedly.

"Why—it—it must be," gasped Tod.

"Now, if I were to find this, would your friend pay to me half the amount that the paper is worth to him?"

Tod started back, almost staggered out of his senses.

He knew that ordinary Turkish officials could be bribed and bought right and left.

But that this minister of the Sultan should class himself with such scoundrels—that Ali Deba, having seized the will, should actually demand a bribe of a million dollars—five million francs—for the return of the stolen document—that fazed Tod to the limit.

"Your excellency doesn't mean it!" gasped the boy.

Ali Deba's face became cold.

"You understand now the terms on which you can have this will. Are you ready to meet the terms?"

There could be no doubting now. Tod's brain seemed all in a whirl.

"May I have a word with my friend outside?" he asked, worried.

"Yes, if you are quick."

Tod hastened out to Phil, explaining what was now in the air.

Phil Granger was wholly staggered.

"He doesn't want actual cash down, anyway, does he?" murmured Phil, through his white, trembling lips.

"I don't know," Eastman answered, simply.

"Dad and I haven't more than three thousand francs altogether in the world," gasped Phil.

"What shall I say to Ali Deba.

"I—I don't know," stammered Phil. "And I can't talk to dad to-day, either. Tod—oh!—go back, please, and see what you can do!"

With head lowered and chest heaving, Tod Eastman went back into the inner office.

"You have forgotten to salaam," reminded Ali Deba, looking at the special pleader with some displeasure as Tod stepped briskly up to the minister's desk.

Tod bowed hastily, awkwardly. The he broke forth:

"Your excellency, the only man who could decide your question now lies near death in his hotel."

"If he dies," hinted Ali Deba, with a cruel smile, "then he would not need the paper."

"He would surely die of excitement if we spoke to him of the matter now," Tod quivered.

"Aha! Well, there is another who would like this will," replied Ali Deba, meaningly.

Tod started inwardly, trying as hard as he could to conceal the light that had dawned on him. Dick Hudson, then, had put Ali Deba up to having that box seized at the customs house on a fraudulent charge.

"You are not prepared to pay five million francs for the will?" asked Ali Deba, with the merciless air of the master of the situation.

"Why, your excellency," protested Tod, "we couldn't pay, anyway, until the will had been taken to America and probated."

"And you imagine that I would be simple enough to listen to such an arrangement as that?" sneered the Sultan's Minister of Revenues.

"Surely," cried Tod, "your excellency did not suppose that we had five million francs in cash?"

"Bah, yes! For all Americans who travel are rich! And what are five million francs to a rich American?—especially when with them he can earn another five million?"

"But I assure your excellency that we could not raise even five thousand francs in ready cash."

"Then you are beggars," cried Ali Deba, angrily. "You have had the impudence to waste my time. Go!"

The turbanned one glided forward, showing Tod out again into the ante-room.

"It may be well to wait here," he whispered.

"I won't let even Job of old beat me in patience," muttered Tod, as he settled down to wait again.

"How good and staunch you are!" murmured Phil.

"Might as well be," smiled Tod. "I haven't been bought out by the enemy."

It was a tremendously long wait, though, for, as the two boys still lingered in the ante-room, dark came on and the attendants lighted a few dim lamps.

At last, however, the turbanned one approached them again.

"An hour ago," whispered this Turk, "his excellency went for the day. It is time for you to go."

In dumb torment of spirit the two boys found themselves again in the courtyard. This time they did not even think of looking for their carriage, but even heaved a sigh of relief when they found themselves permitted to pass the sentries at the gateway.

Near by rested a sedan chair, closed. From behind the curtains peered the malicious face of Dick Hudson.

The flutter of the corner of a handkerchief at the other window of the closed sedan chair brought a Turkish courier within reach of Hudson's whispered voice.

"Those are the Americans," whispered Hudson. "You know what to do."

"By the prophet, I know!" uttered the Turkish courier, in an equally low tone.

With that he set off on a run. The boys saw him go, but thought nothing of the matter.

"A fortune of two millions gone up!" cried Phil, despairingly, as they plodded on through the dark.

"Going up, you mean," corrected Tod, blithely. "It hasn't gone yet."

"But what can we do now?"

"Just keep on trying—fighting!"

They reached the bridge that connects Stamboul with the city proper.

But a cavass, or Turkish policeman, barred their way with:

"To-night no foreigners are allowed to cross the bridge. You must take a boat."

So much a few francs from Dick Hudson's courier had been able to accomplish in that city where every public servant is for sale.

"Oh, well," grumbled Tod, as they plodded down to the water-front, "what does it matter?"

"Nothing much matters now," sighed Phil.

But one caique, or harbor boat, was to be found. This craft was rowed by two men and steered by a third. Four Turkish men sat in the boat as passengers.

"Jump aboard, effendis, if you wish to cross," called the steersman.

Tossing a couple of francs to the steersman, Tod stepped in, followed by his friend.

A shove, and the craft was soon out in the middle of the dark waters of the Golden Horn.

All of a twinkling came the unlooked-for attack.

Tod Eastman found himself caught around the neck by a muscular arm from behind.

Phil Granger saw the flash of steel over his chum's head.

"Look out!" gurgled strangling Tod.

"Treachery!" yelled Phil, sick at heart with fear.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SMILE THAT WAS FULL OF TEETH.

There was no time to think.

It was instinct that told Tod Eastman what to do.

His nearer arm shot back, the elbow landing with hammering force in the pit of his assailant's stomach.

"Jump, Phil!" our hero roared.

Phil had just time to slip through the fingers of the Turk who tried to grab him.

Splash! Tod had wrenched himself free for an instant, with the result that both young Americans struck the water at the same instant.

Straight down they went, out of view of the men in the boat.

Both good swimmers, they swam under water for dear life.

For the sake of keeping together, they swam side by side, frequently touching each other's nearer hands as a guide in the inky blackness.

Overhead, on the surface, it took the rowers an instant or two to comprehend what had happened.

Then they stopped rowing, next backed water, while five other Turks peered down into the black depths, jabbering under their breath.

A hundred and ten yards further on two heads bobbed up cautiously in the darkness.

Tod and Phil took in deep though cautious breaths.

"They can't see us," whispered Tod, softly treading water.

"Not a see!" uttered Phil, delightedly.

They were careful to let nothing below their mouths reach out of the water.

For some moments the men in the boat remained peering and watching.

Then:

"Inshallah!" (It is the will of God) muttered the steersman. "They have drowned."

"At all events they will not bother our distinguished foreign patron again," remarked another Turk.

Phil throbbed with horror as the thought struck him.

"This is Dick Hudson's job!" he chattered.

"Sure!" nodded Tod. "We were green."

"Why?"

"Not to have remembered that in Constantinople any man's life may be bought for a hundred francs."

"Here they come," uttered Phil, as the boat, starting on its way, came straight toward them.

Phil was about to disappear below the water, but Tod uttered a sharp, low:

"Wait!"

"What for?"

"Until you see me duck."

"Why take such chances?" chattered Phil, who was cold, already, in that cool water.

"Wait until they get near enough," Tod whispered, with his lips at one of Phil's ears. "When they get close we want to sink side by side. Take hold of my hand. That's right. When I bob up you do the same. Both of us will grab the gunwale of that caique at the same instant."

"Upset them?"

"Sure! And sink the boat! That'll give 'em what they need—some of their own troubles to attend to. Now sink!"

For the caique was now close to them in the darkness, though no particular watch was being kept by these river thugs.

Two tiny circles of water appeared and spread where the boys had gone down.

Then for a few seconds both youngsters fought to keep below the surface.

But Tod, with his eyes open and his wits very much alert, suddenly squeezed his friend's hand.

Up they shot, the trick so well performed that they bobbed up just under the gunwale of the moving craft.

Grip! Both caught hold in the same instant.

Both sprang up, as if trying to board the boat.

So purposely clumsy was their swift work that in a twinkling the rather free craft careened.

Just as the Turks yelled in their astonishment the water poured in.

Another swift, hard tug and the boat keeled until full of water.

With a gurgle it sank, the Americans going down under it, striking out for the Constantinople side of the Horn.

Less than sixty seconds later both boys came up, not eight yards apart.

Back of them came the sputtering cries of the astounded, tricked Turks.

As two of their number could not swim, the others were busied with keeping them afloat.

"Straight for shore, old chap," whispered Tod, soothingly, as he glided alongside of Granger.

They took it easily, but every moment got further away from the Turks who were taking that unexpected bath.

"That was easily enough done," gurgled Phil, as they swam along.

"We don't want to brag too much. Those scoundrels came within an ace of winding up our watches for us."

Soon the shore of Constantinople loomed up just ahead. Then both boys waded out on a beach of black, slimy ooze, at the foot of a street.

"We want to get away from the shore as fast as we can," urged Tod, in a whisper, as they darted up the street, which was barely wide enough for them to make the trip side by side.

The Turks thereabouts must be at supper, judging by the odors of cobbekery that were heavy on the air.

But, no! Here was one Turk looming up just ahead of them—a cavass at that.

"Halt, there!" commanded the native policeman, suspiciously.

"For only an instant, please," begged Tod, standing at attention, while the cavass scanned them with growing suspicion.

"You have been in the water," uttered the cavass.

"Only a wise man could have guessed that," grimaced Tod.

"Where have you been?" persisted the Turkish cop.

"You yourself have said it—in the water," replied Tod, easily.

"This is a matter for the Inspector of Police to look into," murmured the cavass. "You will follow me. Forward!"

"Hold on!" begged Tod, not stirring.

"What is that?"

"You are taking us to the Inspector of Police?"

"I must."

"Then he will get all there is in it, and you will get little or nothing. Tell me, cavass, does your Inspector divide the rich pluckings with you?"

The Turk shot at our hero a look full of cunning interest.

"Ho! Then you have been up to something unusual, you infidel dogs!"

"Not at all," Tod disputed, composedly.

"Then why do you——"

"Well, what?" questioned Tod, innocently, thrusting his hand into a trousers pocket, while a thoughtful look came into his eyes.

Promptly now the cavass extended one big but dirty hand.

"Backsheesh!" he said threateningly.

"Just as I thought, old chap," observed Tod, with a wink at Phil. "Our old friend, Mr. B."

"What is that you say?" demanded the cavass, suspiciously.

"You yourself named him," retorted Tod. "Our old friend, Mr. B.—Mr. Backsheesh."

"Do you know what the word means, effendi?" grinned the Turkish cop.

"Something like this—eh?"

Tod pressed his hand against the Turk's dirty palm, leaving a five-franc piece in the other's hand.

Swift as thought, the cavass pocketed the large coin, then wheeled upon Phil.

"Did I hear you speak, effendi?"

Phil, too, produced a coin, dropping it into that outstretched palm, whence it found its way into the pocket of the cavass's baggy trousers.

Now again the fellow wheeled upon Tod.

"Backsheesh!" he uttered, in a tone of command.

"Why, Mr. Backsheesh just walked by," Tod protested.

"Backsheesh!"

"Give it to him, and let us get out of this," whispered Phil.

"Backsheesh!" insisted the cavass.

"You've been paid, fellow," retorted Tod, firmly.

"Come, then, and we will see the Inspector," proposed the cop, taking Tod by the arm.

But our hero drew back.

"Here, I'll settle with him," urged Phil, in an undertone. "We can't afford to have any trouble just now. I'll give him twenty francs."

The Turk, knowing no English, caught only the word "franc," which is known everywhere in the Orient.

Wheeling, with a meaning smile, he beamed on Phil, uttering, softly:

"Backsheesh!"

"Oh, bother! Take us to the Inspector, then. I will tell your Inspector that we have just given you ten francs. Will your inspector allow you to keep it all, do you think?"

The cavass looked annoyed for an instant, but he insisted:

"Backsheesh!"

"See here, fellow," warned Tod, "you don't know who we are. You mustn't go too far, or you may get into trouble. You've had your backsheesh. Now, fellow, find us two saddle-horses, that we may go on our way."

"More backsheesh, or I take you to the Inspector," growled the cavass, covetously.

"Fellow, you either find a pair of saddle-horses for us, or else I shall demand that you take us before the Inspector, to whom I will report your conduct. And that report will go higher. Now take us to your Inspector."

It was all sheer bluff, but it went quickly.

The police of Constantinople have heard of foreigners who had influence enough to make trouble for a poor soldier or cavass.

"I shall find the horses at once, effendi," replied the cavass, making a low salaam.

He was as good as his word, setting up a yell that brought the owners of two saddle-horses there on the run.

These saddle-horses are about the most common form of conveyance in Constantinople.

The owner runs just behind his rented beast, keeping up at all times, no matter how fast the horse is ridden.

"Take good care that you do not overcharge these effendis, you rascals," warned the cavass. "Otherwise you may find yourselves being driven from the streets of the city."

Tod set off at a brisk trot, Phil following. Behind pattered the owners of the horses.

Thus in a few minutes the two boys were safely landed at the Hotel de Byzance.

"I'll wait until you go up and see how your father is," hinted Tod. "Then I'll get back to my own hotel, for I'm not through planning yet, and I've got some ideas I want to think over."

Phil had just returned, with the word that Mr. Granger was considerably better, when a heavily turbanned Turk stepped in from the sidewalk.

Approaching the two boys, he made a very low salaam. Then, as he straightened up, he asked, almost whiningly:

"Do your excellencies condescend to remember me?"

"Why, it's the attendant in Ali Deba's office," murmured Tod.

"I am the secretary to the Minister of Revenues," responded the fellow, more importantly. "I am known as Turba."

"You have brought us further word, then?" cried Tod, eagerly.

"Your excellencies, I can speak with but one at a time," protested Turba, solemnly.

The two friends glanced at each other.

"You see him, then," whispered Phil, who next turned and walked away.

"Well?" inquired Tod, wondering much what this visit could mean.

"I come from Ali Deba himself," whispered Turba.

"I judged as much."

"His excellency the minister is much displeased with you."

"I should think it would be the other way," uttered Tod, warmly.

"You have refused the price that he named."

"I should think I did," grunted our hero. "My friends haven't got anything like that amount of money."

"Ali Deba is sure that you are only bargaining with him," hinted the secretary.

Tod looked Turba squarely in the eyes.

"Is that honestly what the Minister of Revenues thinks?"

"He is sure of it," replied the Turk.

"Then, see here," Tod went on, warming and growing a bit angry, "your master may as well understand that all of our party are poor. We haven't the money. If he expects to get it from us——"

"You refuse to pay?" snarled Turba.

There was a decided growl in his voice.

"We don't mean to refuse," Tod went on, in a more pacifying tone. "We simply haven't any money, and so can't pay anything. We're poor—poor—poor!"

"I shall repeat your words to his excellency the minister," uttered Turba, mockingly.

"Do so, and ask him to believe us, once and for all."

"Now, since you are so poor," added the Turk, "I have another message for you."

"Since you are so poor, effendi, you and your friends would do well to leave Constantinople at once. No matter where you go in this city the streets will be full of danger for you. I am certain that you understand."

Turba smiled as he salaamed—a smile that was full of the teeth of the vicious bulldog.

"Do not linger in the city, effendi," he murmured over his shoulder, and was gone.

CHAPTER V.

"NOTHING DOING?" MUTTERS TOD. "I'LL SHOW YOU!"

"It's a long watch I've had, waiting for you, cap'n," observed Bo'sun Bill, when Tod returned to his room in the Hotel de France.

Tod had come here straight from his interview with Turba.

Not that he was afraid to remain out until a late hour.

But he had much that he wanted to think over—half a dozen wild, chaotic plans that he wanted to think well over.

"I've been full of business to-day," Tod replied, evasively.

"And full of trouble, too," murmured Bo'sun Bill, sympathetically.

"Trouble? What makes you say that?"

"Cap'n," replied the old sailor, in a hurt voice, "do ye think I've been around the world so little that I don't know trouble when I see the signs?"

Tod looked at the seaman curiously.

"Not that I want to sail inter yer trouble," protested Bo'sun Bill. "I hain't got a long nose. I ain't tryin' to smell out things that don't belong to my concerns."

"No; I'm sure you're not prying," Tod admitted.

"All I want'er say, cap'n, is that when it comes to any hard hittin', or any good trick that takes an old hand to do well, then jest remember to signal me. Cap'n"—here the sailor came forward, laying a hand earnestly on our hero's shoulder—"last night ye stood by me, jest because we hailed from the same country. Now, I've got to remark that I'll keep out o' the way when I ain't needed. But jest as soon as I am needed ye can count on me to do any job on the deck for ye—any job that's short of piracy."

"I reckon you would, Bo'sun Bill," Tod observed, after a long look into the seaman's rugged face. "You're the sort of fellow that simply sticks to his friends."

"That's what's always been thought, anyway," cried the sailor, delightedly.

"Don't fear, Bill," cried our hero, taking the salt's hand and pressing it warmly; "I'll call on you just as soon as there's a trick that calls for a real man."

"Will ye, lad?"

"Anything that calls for good, old-fashioned fighting sand and grit," promised Eastman.

"Is there any chance that there's a good fight coming?" demanded Bo'sun Bill, eagerly.

"Bill, I'm going to tell you what's up. I'll have to ask you to be doubly careful to keep quiet, for the very reason that the business doesn't belong to me."

"Pipe up, cap'n."

"Sit down, Bill."

In a few minutes Tod had gone through the whole story. Bill showed the discipline he had gathered under the quarter-deck by not interrupting once.

But at the end of the recital Tod asked:

"What do you say, Bill?"

"I'm disappointed, cap'n."

"Why?"

"Because, cap'n, this here is a job for a slick lawyer—or a banker, mebber. No show at all for a man-o'-war's-man."

"I'm not so sure of that."

"You can't get a pound of fight out of a ton of this trouble," Bill warned our hero.

"Why not?"

"Leastways, cap'n, it'd be plumb foolishness to talk o' fighting. Could three of us lick a battalion o' Turkish infantry?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"Cap'n, what you want is in the palace of the Minister of Revenues. I know that palace. There's only a few guards there at night."

"Is that true?" Tod asked, becoming suddenly interested. "Then I'm not so sure that a fight might not work, as a last resort."

"There's only a few guards there, cap'n," Bill repeated. "But the only bell in Constantinople or Stamboul is in the palace of the Minister of Revenues. That I know."

"What has a bell got to do with it?"

"Well, cap'n, mebbe you don't know how a Moslem Turk hates the sound of a bell. But they do hate it, all of these people. That's why no mosque or church in all Turkey has a bell. That's just why they have one in the palace of the Minister of Revenues. The boomin' o' that bell by night would startle all Stamboul and Constantinople. Every Turk that woke up would know that some one had got away from the palace with something that he'd ought to left behind. Every Turk in the two cities 'd be astir, looking for a chance to win the Sultan's reward."

"Then a fight at the palace——"

"Would jest start that old bell a-boomin', cap'n. More'n that, it would turn out, like a flash, the battalion of Turkish infantry that's stationed right near. Nobody could get away from that palace after once that bell got to ringing. You'd have to be bigger 'n four companies o' sogers—bigger than the population of the two cities."

"Oh, well," smiled Tod, "I don't expect to fight at the palace. But I'm glad you told about the bell and the battalion, just the same."

"So I don't jest see where I could fit in on any raid on the palace," Bo'sun Bill remarked thoughtfully.

"Not in that way," Tod admitted. "But wait. I may strike something that you could do better for us than any one else."

"Then pipe, or run up the signal," replied the sailor, solemnly.

Yet, despite a heap of thinking, it must be admitted that Tod Eastman turned in that night with nothing of a real plan worked out.

He was astir early in the morning, however, and reported early at the hotel where the Grangers were stopping.

This time Phil came out into the corridor, followed by his sister.

It was the first time that our hero had had a chance for a real look at the girl.

She was tall, rather slender, yet rounded. The great mass of hair coiled around her head was almost golden.

Flora Granger had been through much trouble during

the last twenty-four hours, yet she was not one of the weeping kind.

Her eyes were clear and bright as she stepped up to Tod, holding out her hand unaffectedly.

"Phil has told me how good you've been to us in our great trouble, Mr. Eastman," she murmured softly, looking into Tod's eyes so steadily that the youngster all but blushed. "Phil can't thank you, neither can I, but we can try to tell you how much we appreciate your goodness at the moment when there isn't another soul that we can turn to."

"Believe me, Miss Granger," replied Tod, a bit unsteadily, "I don't want any thanks. I don't deserve any, either, unless I can help you to win out in this strange fight."

"But surely there's no hope of our winning now?" questioned Flora, looking at our hero in astonishment.

"Why, yes, I believe there is," Tod replied at once.

"A chance to win?" broke in Phil, huskily. "How?"

"I don't know," Tod admitted.

"Oh, we might as well give it up," Phil protested. "We have Turba's warning, and that means business, you can be sure. Constantinople isn't safe for us. I wouldn't mind for myself, but I don't want to see dad or Flo come to grief, nor do I want to see you, my friend, get smashed under the wreck of our fortune."

"Then you believe in giving it all up?" demanded Tod, slowly.

"Yes."

"I don't!"

Flo's steady eyes were on our hero. Somehow, under that magic impulse, the boy, usually cool-headed, began almost to think he could move mountains.

Such great faith is always needed when one is to do truly great things.

"Have you any plan, Mr. Eastman?" asked the girl, slowly.

"Not any that's well enough formed to discuss yet," Tod evaded her.

"Then I agree with Phil. We can't bear the thought of seeing you risk your life on a hopeless effort."

"But that's just the point," cried Tod, with a smile. "I hope to prove that it isn't a hopeless case. Tell me how your father is, and then I'm off on the run."

"Papa will be sitting up to-day, if he doesn't receive any further excitement," replied Flora.

"Good! Great! And now I'm off. You'll hear from me later."

Tod went as fast as his feet could carry him to the American consulate.

There again he employed the telephone wire running to the summer residence of the American ambassador.

Again it was Secretary Grimshaw who answered him.

"Oh, that's you, Mr. Eastman, is it?" came the voice of Grimshaw. "Well, we've learned nothing new, but the American ambassador hasn't been idle on your affair. At noon he is to have an audience with the Sultan. The Sultan himself will be asked to probe into this matter."

"Glory!" breathed Tod, his eyes sparkling. "The Sultan can make things hum if he wants to."

"Ah, there you've hit the nail on the head, my friend," murmured the far-away voice of Grimshaw. "The Sultan can—if he wants to. But Ali Deba happens to be a very useful cabinet minister, whom the Sultan might not care to offend."

"Then——"

"You know just where the case rests at this moment, Eastman. It will be evening before the American ambassador will be back here. But, stay! You may see him at the consulate if he drops in there on his way back from the Sultan's palace."

"Then stay here I do!" clicked Tod. "A thousand thanks to you."

"That's all for the present," wound up Mr. Grimshaw. "Good-bye!"

Then followed a weary wait. It was exactly quarter of two when the American ambassador's carriage stopped at the consulate.

Tod was introduced to that official by the consul-general.

"I have spoken to the Sultan about the affair of your friends," replied the ambassador. "The Sultan made an effort to conceal a yawn."

"He will do nothing—the Sultan?" cried Tod Eastman, almost fiercely.

"In the parlance of slang," replied the ambassador, smiling gravely, "I fear any further report will be merely 'nothing doing.'"

"Nothing doing?" blazed Tod, under his breath, as he left the presence of the ambassador. "I'll show you!"

The boy still lingered at the consulate. Though at first inclined to blame the American ambassador, he soon realized how idle this was. The representative of American interests in Turkey had simply done all he could. He was powerless to do more.

"I've heard just a bit about your extraordinary case," remarked a low voice, with a decidedly English accent, just behind our hero.

Tod quickly turned, to find himself looking up into the face of a six-foot Englishman of perhaps thirty.

"Hawfort is my name," smiled the stranger. "Second secretary at the British Legation. Would you mind telling me something about the case?"

In his present frame of mind Tod wouldn't mind telling anybody. They found a quiet corner at the consulate, and then the boy poured out the whole story.

"Really, it's provoking, isn't it?" observed the Englishman. "In any civilized country such a representation from the American ambassador would receive the fullest attention from the sovereign. But just now Ali Deba, who has succeeded in extorting more taxes through the customs houses than any of his predecessors ever did, is very much in the Sultan's eye. The Sultan would hesitate dreadfully about offending Ali Deba."

"I'd offend him good and hard if I knew how!" uttered Tod, vengefully.

"Curious," smiled the Englishman. "I've a dragoman who feels the same way you do about it."

"A dragoman?" repeated Tod. (A dragoman is a courier or runner.) "Is your man a Turk?"

"Every inch a Turk," smiled Hawfort. "My man, Mustapha, is one of the sons of a farmer who was the sworn enemy of Ali Deba in the country town where both were brought up. Mustapha would sell his soul to be even with Ali Deba, but the minister is too powerful for him. Mustapha's brother, Korisha, whom Ali Deba did not recognize, has even gone so far as to obtain a position in Ali Deba's palace. Both live in hopes of vengeance on their father's enemy one of these days."

"Why can't I meet Mustapha—and his brother?" demanded Tod, wheeling around on the Englishman.

"Why? Why, I'm not sure that you couldn't. But what could you do?"

"I'd like to see Mustapha," persisted Tod, eagerly. "Can I?"

"Why, the beggar's within five minutes of here at the present moment," replied the Englishman.

"Will you do me the greatest favor in the world by presenting him to me?" begged Eastman.

"On one condition, yes," replied Hawfort. "Mustapha, you know, wears the livery, the uniform, of a dragoman of the British Legation. Now, you mustn't cook up anything with Mustapha that'll get the British Legation into an awkward mess."

"I won't!" breathed Tod. "But, oh, let me see him!"

"Stay here, and I'll send him to you."

Mustapha came, salaaming. The fellow spoke excellent English.

For much more than an hour the two talked.

Young Eastman even drew upon his slender store of money in order to pass over some of that backsheesh without which business with a Turk seems to be an impossibility.

It was past the middle of the afternoon when Tod Eastman hurriedly left the American consulate-general.

Yet as he walked his eyes were bright and big, his head full of stupendous, whirling thoughts.

He had a plan at last.

A tremendous plot, at that!

CHAPTER VI.

"KILL THE INFIDEL DOG!"

Close to the Grand Rue de Pera and the Hotel de France two short, narrow, little streets afforded a short cut out on the way home.

Tod plunged into the first of these, seeing no one ahead of him but a Turkish shoemaker working in the doorway of his home and, at the further end of the little street, a fruit seller coming along with a basket of his wares.

Nothing was further from Tod's thoughts than immediate trouble.

But the fruit peddler, as our hero passed him, lurched so that Tod struck the basket, spilling all the fruit.

Like a flash, wishing to avoid even the appearance of trouble just now, Tod's hand flew to his pocket.

He meant to give the peddler a few copper coins by way of backsheesh.

"The infidel dog has ruined me!" screamed the peddler, turning and darting up the street. "Now he seeks a knife to kill me! Help, all good Moslems!"

Where did all the people come from?

They poured out through the doorways so rapidly that Tod found himself hemmed in on all sides.

"Jupiter!" he gasped. "I can't afford to get into a row just now!"

So he bawled out, lustily:

"Bring that poor, frightened peddler back. I don't want to harm him. All I want to do is to pay him for the damage done his wares."

But still the crowd poured out into the little, alley-like street.

"This looks like real trouble," reflected the boy, uneasily.

Now that the crowd was so great, the peddler seemed to regain his courage.

He came back at the rear of the crowd, crying loudly:

"The infidel dog tried to kill me."

"Bring that poor, scared wretch here, that I may pay him for the damage that I did by accident," called Tod, trying to smile.

Yet, though a smile appeared in his face, his heart was beginning to sink within him.

He remembered Turba's words of the night before.

Was this a plot of Turba's?

"Gracious! How easily I could be killed here, and none of my friends ever know a thing about it," quaked the boy.

Though none of the crowd had yet offered him real violence, the force of the crush drove him back against a wall.

Tod was careful to make his forced stand against a part of the wall where no window opened behind him.

"Now bring the man here," he called, "that I may hand him his backsheesh."

"Trust not the infidel's lying tongue," wailed the peddler, above all the clamor of other voices. "He is an infidel—a defiler of all followers of the true faith of the Prophet. To my face he said a most vile thing about the Prophet!"

This Moslem crowd became frantic as soon as the words had left the peddler's lips.

"That's a lie!" nailed Tod, quickly. "I spoke no disrespect of your Prophet, Mohammed! That fellow's mouth is so full of lies that he cannot be a true Moslem like the rest of you."

"He called me an infidel and a dog!" shrieked the peddler.

Again a warning clamor went up from the mob, that was growing more ugly every moment.

Then some one at the rear of the crowd sent up the snarling cry:

"Kill the infidel dog!"

Instantly there was a roar of approval.

Women sank back against the walls, while men with inflamed faces pushed forward.

Then steel flashed.

At that sight Tod Eastman knew that he was in for it.

There was murder in the air, and against such an infuriated mob he was helpless.

Thump! Tod's foot shot out, landing on the abdomen of the first man who tried to reach him with a dagger.

In a twinkling Tod had bent over and snatched that dagger.

Now he straightened up, his eyes full of fight.

"This is a dirty, murderous trick!" he gritted between his teeth. "These people piled out here to murder me. Well, let 'em come on! Steel to steel now—and I'll give a bully good account of myself."

Backed against the wall, his eyes blazing with war declared, Tod held them off for a few moments.

Every time that a Turk got within arm's reach Tod's captured knife was driven out. He was keeping these fanatics at bay.

Then came a Turk with a lance.

Thump! From a safe distance he landed a fearful blow against Tod's left side.

Like a lump of lead our hero sank to the broken pavement, groaning, gasping, in his helplessness.

"Now kill the infidel dog!" roared the man with the lance.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE BRINK OF A BOLD DEED.

In that second of helplessness Tod saw half a dozen gleaming knives close to his face.

But the man with the lance cried out in a voice of thunder:

"Back, all of you! I downed the infidel! He belongs to me!"

Those of the rabble who were eager for the boy's life were thrust back roughly by the man with the lance, who used the long shaft to push his way through the crowd.

Then came another thud, followed by a yell of anguish.

Above all came a bellowing voice:

"To the brig with ye, ye thugs! Blast ye for pirates! Shove back there!"

Thump! thump! thump!

Bo'sun Bill, coming straight down out of the air, had landed with both feet on the head of the fanatic with the lance.

Yet never for a second did Bill lose his own balance.

He caught up that lance, laying about with it in a wonderfully lively fashion.

Broken heads were the style just now in that crowded little alleyway.

"I'll show ye, ye pirates!" roared Bo'sun Bill, wheeling and swinging in all directions.

He had a dozen victims in almost as many seconds.

"The police! Call the cavass!" yelled one Turk who had been nimble enough to save himself a broken head.

Tod, as Bo'sun Bill cleared the way about them, tried weakly to get on his feet again.

But Bill caught the boy around the waist with one strong arm, lifting young Eastman fairly off his feet.

"Gangway, ye Malay scum!" roared the sailor, wheeling and retreating down the street, clearing a prompt and wide path by swinging that terrible lance shaft.

So Bill fled until he came to an open door.

Up a flight of stairs he bounded, still bearing Tod and the lance, and then up a second flight of steps and out on to the roof of the house.

Outside, the mob was regaining some of its courage.

"Batter the door down!"

"Hunt the dogs out!"

"Batter and hunt all ye like," grimaced Bo'sun Bill, as, still carrying our hero, he bounded with catlike tread over the roofs of the houses.

After going some distance Bill stopped long enough to lay the lance gently on a roof.

Then he sped on again until he came to a stairway against the side of a house in another street.

Down this stairway slipped the sailor, then propped our hero on his feet.

"Ye can stand now and walk, cap'n?" demanded the old salt, anxiously, as he looked into Tod's face.

"All right, Bill!"

"Full steam, then, cap'n."

Their escape had been successfully made. In a few moments more the pair rested safely in Tod's room at the Hotel de France.

"As close to a torpedo as ever ye'll sail, cap'n," grinned the old salt.

"Whew!" panted Tod. "My head isn't clear from it yet. But how on earth did you land there, Bill?"

"Hung from the gutter of the house and dropped plumb on that fellow's head," grinned the sailor man.

"But how did you happen to be up on that house-top?"

"Ran there from the street," responded the sailor. "Went in through the same door that I piloted you through a minute later."

"But how did you come to be in that neighborhood at all?"

"Jest happened because I've been sorter cruising in yer wake all day, cap'n," Bill glowed.

"You've been shadowing me?"

"I b'lieve that's what a lubber 'd call it," Bo'sun Bill replied.

"You've been right after me all day?"

Tod's eyes were wide open with amazement.

"I didn't see you once, Bill."

"Maybe not, cap'n."

"But, Bill, I'm full of a scheme now!"

"Get it from that Turk in the British Legation colors?" asked Bill, coming close and speaking in a grinning whisper.

"Yes. Listen!"

For half an hour or more they talked in voices that could not be heard beyond the room.

Then Bo'sun Bill, provided with money from Tod's rapidly thinning purse, went out.

Tod in the meantime hurried over to the Hotel de Byzance, returning with Phil.

In the midst of their pow-wow Bill came back, followed by two native runners bearing packages.

"Now, get out, ye Malays!" grunted Bill, when he had handed the runners their backsheesh.

As soon as the door had been closed and bolted Bill began to undo his purchases.

He held up cork helmets and garments.

"I saw something that gave me an idea," Bill whispered. "That is, if ye've got a little more cash handy."

"I have," Phil nodded promptly.

"Then look at these duds first, shipmates."

Bill held up the clothing that he had bought. There were two Norfolk suits, leggins and pith helmets.

"Them English naval officers are great chaps for going ashore in citizens' duds," Bill declared. "Going in mufti, they call it. Now, these here rigs are jest like what a pair o' British midshipmen might wear on a shore cruise away from the ship."

Bo'sun Bill thrust in a big chew of tobacco and spat before he went on, in an eager whisper:

"But hear the luck! The feller that I bought these togs of has two real uniform coats—the long ones that the British naval officers wear on deck watch. Coats that some young officers, hard up, hocked, ye understand. I can have 'em for eighteen francs apiece. How's that for luck, shipmates?"

"Here," breathed Phil, eagerly, handing the tar more money than he had asked for.

"No time to be lost, on an early sailing," jerked out Bo'sun Bill, and vanished.

"Oh, we must put that wonderful dream through!" throbbed Phil Granger.

"We'll know in a little while what show there is," replied Tod, trying to conceal the fact that he was trembling as much from eagerness as was his friend.

Bill was promptly back, with two officers' overcoats.

"I don't blame those English midshipmen for hocking such coats," laughed Tod. "Such heavy things as these were never meant to be worn in the scorching heat of Constantinople."

"Them coats, cap'n, wouldn't come amiss on a rainy night," affirmed Bo'sun Bill. "An' the sky looks a bit weather-bad."

Tod and Phil, who had already gotten into their new clothing, now tried on the uniform coats, which proved to be not bad fits.

"An' I bought a hat-band for myself," grinned Bill, hauling out a purchase from one of his pockets.

It was such a hat-band as sailors wear to show the name of their ship.

This one bore the name of a British battle-ship.

"Say, we ought to look the part!" thrilled Phil Granger.

"We've got to look it if we're to win," clicked Tod.

There came a cautious knock at the door.

Hastily stowing the uniform coats out of sight, Tod signed to Bill to open the door.

It was Mustapha, in his dragoman's livery of the British Legation.

And Mustapha at this moment looked as solemnly stupid as if he knew nothing at all.

At a sign from our hero Phil and Bill stepped out into the corridor.

Then, when the door had been closed, Mustapha glided to Eastman's side.

For some minutes these plotters, American and Turk, whispered earnestly in their lowest tones.

Then Tod opened the door, beckoning to his friend.

"Phil, give our good friend, who is going now, all the backsheesh you can spare."

Three hours after dark fell a ramshackle hack rolled slowly through that portion of Stamboul, close to the water-front, where stood the palace of Ali Deba, Minister of Revenues.

Fairly up to the gate of the palace rolled this old-style vehicle.

Such an arrival in the night hours being unusual, eight or ten of the palace guards, who had the general appearance of the police, piled out beyond the entrance to have a look at the new arrival.

Reining in his weary-looking horses, the driver turned and called:

"Effendis, this is the palace of the Minister of Revenues."

At the same moment Bo'sun Bill leaped down from his seat beside the driver, opened the nearest carriage door, stood back, saluted, then stood at attention.

Out stepped two young men wearing the officers' deck overcoats of the British navy.

The guards looked on curiously while the two young men stalked toward them.

Under the strain of excitement that was surging up within him Phil Granger faltered for an instant.

His knees seemed to grow weak under him.

"Brace up, old fellow," hissed Tod's sharp but low whisper in his friend's ear.

Phil tried to smile, making his eyes convey the message:

"I'm all right!"

"Now one false step means swift death!" warned Tod's keen whisper.

Then they straightened, fell apart, stopped whispering.

For they were facing the curious palace guard.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRICK SLIPS A COG!

The sergeant of the guard saluted the pretended officers with great respect.

Your true Turk has a great regard for officers.

More than that, the British navy in the past has filled the Turks with wholesome respect.

Tod and Phil returned the salutes with great care.

"Effendis," asked the sergeant, "may your servant inquire your wishes?"

"We would like to have just a glimpse of the inside of the palace," Tod answered carelessly.

"Effendis," replied the sergeant, regretfully, "that is quite impossible."

"Surely you can't mean that," protested Tod, good-humoredly.

"Unfortunately, effendi, it is the strict rule of the Minister of Revenues that no visitors are to be admitted after nightfall."

"That's what some of our friends told us on the ship," Tod replied, easily, while Phil marveled at his friend's assurance. "But we knew that you wouldn't be too hard on us."

"We are all your servants, effendis," the sergeant assured the supposed English midshipman, with another salute. "But our orders are positive."

"But our ship sails at daylight," urged Tod.

"It is most unfortunate, effendi."

"We have wagered our brother officers that we could get a glimpse inside this palace."

"Effendi, this palace is closed as tightly after nightfall as that of the sacred Sultan himself."

Tod appeared to reflect. As a matter of fact, that which he did next was the next step in his regular plan.

"We must win that wager with our brother officers somehow," he argued. "True, the wager is not much—merely twenty francs. But we wish to win. You are a sergeant?"

"Even so, effendi."

"Then perhaps backsheesh will prove an easy introduction to you."

"Backsheesh!" cried the sergeant, reluctantly.

Tempted as he was, he was about to refuse firmly, but Tod caught him at the word.

"Backsheesh! Of course!" Tod hurried on, diving a hand into one of his pockets. "Twenty francs for the worthy sergeant; ten for each of his fine-looking men!"

There was a quick rattle of silver.

Tod dropped four five-franc pieces into the open hand that the sergeant extended almost mechanically.

Phil in the meantime passed two five-franc pieces to each of the privates of the guard.

"For we must win our wager, you know," Tod smiled confidently.

But the sergeant tried to thrust back the money.

"Effendi! No!" he cried firmly. "For doing such a thing we would expect to lose our heads under the executioner's sword. It is not to be thought of."

"Now, you are not such a surly fellow!" Tod remonstrated. "All we wish is a glimpse of the inside of the palace. Then we will go. How, will you not be with us to watch and see that we do not steal anything?"

"Effendis like yourselves would not steal," replied the sergeant. "But your request cannot even be thought of, since our orders are as strict as if they came from the sacred Sultan himself."

"But you are a sensible fellow. Surely, you know there can be no harm in admitting two British officers, who, you know, do not come to steal."

"If it rested with me, effendis," began the sergeant. "But——"

"Why, even your men will think you are very foolish to hand back your backsheesh," protested Tod, looking at the privates.

Truth to tell, the privates, since they were not responsible for their sergeant's acts, did already look highly reluctant over the idea of giving back this very easy backsheesh.

Add to this, ten francs is in Turkey a good fortnight's wage. Twenty francs will support a poor family in comfort for a month.

"See here," glowed Tod, resolutely, "our minds are made up, even if yours is not. So we will double the backsheesh." Again the silver clinked.

Now, the guards began to look eagerly at their leader as their hands held the increased store of wealth.

The sergeant would have been much more than human, had he been able to resist such looks with all the firmness that his duty required.

"If it were possible——" he hesitated.

"But it is possible, sergeant—quite possible!" insisted Tod. "You have but to step inside with us—you and two of your men, and show us softly through some of the public portions of the palace. Come!"

Tod stepped toward the open doorway, Phil keeping at his side.

With a last gasp of protest the sergeant followed, still trying to frame words of refusal.

But the clink of silver in his hand silenced the words that he would utter.

He turned, holding up three fingers of the idle hand, and three of the guard stepped inside after him.

"This is the main corridor, effendis," whispered the scared sergeant, leading them down a wide corridor that they had already traveled in the day-time.

It was dimly-lighted, now, yet there was light enough.

Then into another corridor the sergeant led his guests.

And here the sergeant received one of the frights of his life.

For, from behind one of the marble columns, there stepped out a turbanned Turk in the garb of one of the minister's attendants.

It was Korisha, the brother of Mustapha and secret foe of Ali Deba, the Minister of Revenues.

Well did Korisha, who was in the plot through his brother, Mustapha, know who his visitors were.

On the other hand, Tod and Phil instantly recognized their man from the description that Mustapha had furnished.

But the sergeant, who knew nothing, and who had a great sense of guilt, turned color and his knees shook under him.

"Whom have you here, sergeant?" demanded Korisha.

Then, as the sergeant, with visions of being beheaded in the morning, tried to stammer out a reply. Korisha, who was one of the minor secretaries to the minister, broke in:

"Hold! Our guests are officers from the British fleet? It is a visit of curiosity? Then his excellency, Ali Deba, will not be offended. But you, sergeant, and your men, should be on duty at the entrance. Go you back there, and I will myself show the effendis what it may be permitted them to see."

Tod pulled off his heavy uniform overcoat, tossing it to Bo'sun Bill. Phil followed suit.

And now the sergeant, who had ceased to shake, drew back with his men.

"This way, effendis," begged Korisha, leading them further down the corridor.

Around a turn, and in another passage, Korisha halted, whispering in Tod's ear:

"Effendi, I have been able to do all that my brother Mustapha told me to do. With false keys I was able to enter the office of Ali Deba. Under his desk I found the chest, locked. I have brought it outside. Wait, and in an instant it shall be in your hands."

Korisha vanished, yet was gone only a few seconds.

How Tod's heart thrilled and his pulses throbbed when his eyes again rested on that precious chest in the attendant's hands!

"Now, you are sure that you can get it out of the palace?" whispered Korisha, as he placed the precious chest on the floor.

Tod, with a smile, nodded to Bo'sun Bill.

That worthy came forward, picking up the chest with one hand.

The boys draped their overcoats over the chest so neatly that it looked as if the tar carried nothing but the coats.

"I fancy, my good Korisha, that we shall leave the palace unsuspected," laughed Tod.

"Nor need you leave by the main entrance," hinted the Turk. "I can let you out through a side door, into a court. You can call your carriage to the head of the court. Come! It will be easy!"

Korisha wheeled and led the way down another dimly lighted passageway.

They had all but reached the open door letting out on the court, when that inquisitive sergeant and several of his men appeared.

Noting something a bit strange in Bo'sun Bill's gait, the sergeant darted swiftly forward.

Grab! He had snatched away the overcoats in a twinkling, dropping those garments on the floor of the corridor. There stood the precious chest revealed!

"Quick! For your lives, friends!" quivered Tod East-

man, whipping out a revolver from under his blouse. "Phil and Bill, you go first!"

All hands had been taken so utterly by surprise that Tod's instant, decisive order bore fruit.

With the roar of a lion Bo'sun Bill shot forward, striking out with telling effect.

Phil, leaping to his side, caught at the other side of the chest.

They bolted through the human barrier.

More than one man fell back as our hero's revolver flashed before their faces.

It took, in all, but a few seconds for the adventurers to leap through and past the crowd—out into the courtyard.

"Get back, you Moslem rats!" warned Tod Eastman, facing the palace guard, pistol in hand.

Phil and Bo'sun Bill staggered on with the trunk—staggered because of their great excitement.

Boom! went the palace bell.

"That means a whole battalion of Turkish infantry to face!" gasped Phil, as they shot out of the court.

CHAPTER IX.

MOSLEM VENGEANCE AT ITS WORST.

Just as it chanced, the Turkish driver of the cab had drawn up just past the end of the court.

As the three Americans, now running for sheer dear life, darted out of the court, they almost fell against the waiting hack.

Phil's pistol covered the startled driver.

The young American's voice rang with the clear hint of instant danger as he shouted:

"Driver! No tricks, mind you, or I shoot you full of lead! Drive to the bridge as fast as you know how. Start, this instant—for your life!"

In that same instant the three Americans fairly piled into the carriage with their precious chest.

On the instant of the order the driver brought down his lash and the horses bolted.

Now, that driver had the wit to know, from the sound of the bell—the only one—that had not boomed in twenty years, that thieves were escaping from the palace.

Yet the driver was a prudent man who did not wish to die at once.

Moreover, that driver knew that, just before he reached the bridge between Stamboul and Constantinople his hack would be surrounded by hundreds of Turkish infantrymen.

Then let these white men shoot, if they would.

They would find scores of the Sultan's soldiers engaged in shooting at them!

So this Moslem driver, with a swift prayer addressed to the Prophet Mohammed, preferred to obey orders to the letter.

His startled horses bolted so fast that the frantic palace guards were left behind in the race.

For a full minute the driver drove at full speed.

Then, across the street he espied an irregular line of waiting soldiers.

More lined either side of the roadway.

Over all came the sharp command in a Turkish officer's voice:

"In the name of the Porte, halt!"

"Protect me, soldiers!" screamed the driver. "My passengers have threatened to shoot me!"

Then he reined sharply up.

"Be not afraid of your passengers, fellow!" grunted an officer, as soldiers thronged about the hack.

Thrusting their rifles close, they pulled open the doors on either side.

Then a puzzled yell went up. The nearest officer started back, yelling at the driver:

"How, now, fellow? Where are the passengers you told us of?"

"Are they not inside?" gasped the driver.

"Inside, you idiot? Not a solitary being is in there!"

"It is strange," faltered the driver, leaping to the ground. "They sprang inside and ordered me to drive at my fastest. I obeyed because I knew the soldiers would meet us."

"Look inside for yourself, simpleton. They are not there!"

Truly they were not.

At that very instant Tod Eastman, Phil and Bo'sun Bill were entrusting themselves to the dark, silent waters of the Golden Horn.

Favored by the absolute dark overhead, they had carried out the plan that Tod's mile-a-minute brain had formed on the spur of the moment.

No sooner had the hack started on its swift course than Tod had thrown open the other door of the vehicle.

"Jump!" he vibrated. "To the water-front!"

And jump they had, landing in the street, out of sight of either palace guards or waiting infantrymen.

Down through one of the narrow side streets they had shot, bearing the chest with them in their flight.

And now they were soon a hundred yards out from that unlighted shore.

Since the chest would float by itself, and was known to be water-proof, Bo'sun Bill swam and towed it.

"If they don't suspect our course at once," panted Tod, as he swam alongside of Phil, "we have a very decent chance to get away."

"But if they suspect, it will be easy for the enemy to have a force of men waiting to pick us out of the water on the other side," quavered Phil Granger.

"Oh, I don't know," came our hero's comfortable response. "Constantinople has miles of water front, and we're tolerably good swimmers."

Yet, at the first off, they swam straight across.

As they went, Tod listened keenly for sounds of horsemen or running men on the bridge.

"They haven't thought of the water yet," he murmured to his chum. "They are still scouring the streets and

houses around there. I wonder if old Ali Deba knows what's what by this time?"

"He'll be the wildest man in Stamboul!" chuckled Phil.

"Unless he succeeds in getting his hands on us!" uttered Tod, grimly.

Bill had little to say. He swam, towing the chest. But presently he observed:

"If we only had the key, mates, we wouldn't bother long with this chest. When we try to sneak it through the streets of the city it will look big as a house to every blessed cavass we pass."

Tod sighed. He had not lost a whit of his nerve, but for the first time he began to feel how impossible it would be to carry this wild adventure through to success.

"If we're caught, that's the end of life for us," he muttered. "And I don't see how we can help being caught."

Yet that very thought served only to make him recklessly resolved to carry the adventure through as far as possible and to accept his fate at the end.

"Where'll we try to land?" asked Phil, as they passed the middle of the waters of the Golden Horn.

"An eighth of a mile away from the bridge-end will do as well, on a chance, as any other place," Tod Eastman answered. "Don't you think so, fellows?"

"You're the cap'n," returned Bill, coolly. "It'd be a bad time, too, to change captains."

So they changed their course slightly and made for shore.

As they neared the shore they listened more intently than ever.

From somewhere on the Constantinople side a search-light suddenly swept blindingly over the surface of the water.

But this light, strong enough to pick up any stray craft, did not show up the nearly hidden heads of the swimmers.

"Not a craft on the water at this point," observed Tod, after looking. "That's bully. The Turks wouldn't look for swimmers, and, knowing there's no boat afloat around here, they won't be so likely to look to the water front."

They swam on with more assurance, looking sharply ahead for human figures.

After a little they made a landing at the foot of a narrow street.

All the people who lived in this neighborhood seemed to be abed.

"Come on," whispered Tod. "Phil, you keep at my side. Then Bill can keep behind us. That will help hide the chest."

In this manner they made their way up that little alley, and turned into another.

How still Constantinople seemed! For a little while Tod began to hope that they could get safely through to cover.

"There's just a chance," he whispered to his friend.

"I hope it's a good one," sighed Phil, doubtfully.

They came out at the next street corner, plump upon a cavass, who looked them over suspiciously.

Phil felt near sinking.

Tod, by a great effort, put on a smiling, cheerful front.

"Good evening, officer," he greeted the cavass, in the latter's own tongue.

"Where do you go so late at night?" demanded the cavass.

"Tourists on their way back to the hotel," smiled Tod.

"And what does your man carry? Let me see!"

There was no use in hiding the chest. Bill, though he must have quaked inwardly, held the chest forward.

"Some curios we have been buying," lied Tod, cheerfully.

"We are tired out with our long tramp."

But the cavass still surveyed the chest.

"He hasn't heard that such a chest is missing," throbbed Tod, making up his mind swiftly. "He is simply suspicious on general principles."

Tod's ready hand dived down into the pocket lined with silver.

He brought up a franc piece, dropped it into the cavass's hand, and yawned.

"We are very tired, officer. Drink our health, won't you?"

Then as if as a matter of course, Tod started on forward, Phil falling in at his side and Bill bringing up the rear.

For a few moments the cavass stared after them, his mind only half made up.

From them, the cavass's gaze wandered down to the franc-piece of silver in his hand.

He went on his way.

The friends hurried on through two more short, narrow streets.

Now they came to a little Greek inn where the lights still burned, though there were no customers.

Wheeling abruptly, Tod stepped into the inn. The smiling, salaaming proprietor came forward.

"We wish to rest a while," Tod announced. "A private room, and some of your best wine."

All smiles, the proprietor led them into a hallway and upstairs to the second floor.

Here he ushered them into a large, meanly furnished room, setting two lighted candles down on a table.

"The wine shall be right up, gentlemen," promised the proprietor, and hurried out.

Tod gave hurried instructions to Phil, who stole down the steps and out into the street.

"Any show now, cap'n, do you think?" asked Bill, coolly.

"The first show we've had," Tod replied. "Not a big one, either."

The landlord came back with the wine.

Tod paid him, and the landlord went out, leaving them to themselves behind a closed door.

"A drink won't hurt ye, cap'n," observed Bo'sun Bill, pushing the decanter toward his young leader.

"I never drink such stuff," Tod replied, wearily.

"Then, what did ye order it for?"

"So as to have an excuse for being here."

Bill poured out some of the wine for himself, raising the glass to his lips.

"Whew! murder!" he sputtered. "They must use vitrol in making this wine!"

"Pour some away, to make it look as if we had been drinking," whispered Tod, and Bill obeyed.

Then, in racking suspense, they waited—just waited—for the issue of death or success.

"It depends mostly on Phil, now," Tod whispered, after a long interval. "I wonder how he's getting along?"

"What's he doing?"

"Getting the key to the chest and arranging for our flight from Constantinople."

Phil drew out an envelope that Korisha had handed him, and scanned the paper that it contained. Then he put it away again, sighing in his impatience.

"What's that sound?" he whispered, after another interval.

"Don't get to hearin' mice, cap'n," urged Bo'sun Bill.

"But I thought I heard a noise in the street."

"Maybe ye did, cap'n. Other folks may want to use the town to-night, as well as ourselves."

But Tod stole to the curtained window, pulling the curtain back ever so little.

Down below, the lights of the inn threw a dim glow into the street.

"Bill!" whispered our hero, hoarsely.

Soft as a cat the tar hurried to his leader's side.

Both looked down upon a squad of police halting before the inn.

"Looks like the jig is up!" grated Bill.

"They've found us!"

"What ye goin' to do?"

"Look!"

Tod's low voice rang with horror.

For Phil Granger, head erect and walking briskly, had stepped around the corner, plump into the party of police!

"It's all over!" gasped Tod.

But now, below, there was a sudden vanishing of the police squad.

"You'll find the foreigners upstairs!" they could hear the Greek announcing.

Bill sprang to the door, as if to hold it by his weight.

"It's no use," called Tod. "We can't hold 'em off long. Might as well step back!"

With a grunt Bill stepped back.

Then the door was burst open, and the flash of steel was seen.

A half score of policemen, with swords drawn, surged into the room.

One of the first to come in, and he appeared to be the leader, was Turba, Ali Deba's secretary.

"There's the chest!" cried Turba, gloatingly.

Then he turned, frowningly, upon the policemen.

"Well, what do you stand here for, stupids?" he roared.

"To your work. Ali Deba wants no prisoners to-night! Kill! Hack the foreign dogs to pieces!"

CHAPTER X.

SABRES ON THE TRAIL.

To Tod Eastman nothing remained but the instinct to die fighting.

He might have drawn his revolver and shot one or two of the policemen ere he was cut down.

But he shivered at the thought.

It seemed too much like murder!

At the instant that the police rushed in he had moved toward the table with a half-formed purpose.

Now his hand came down upon the candles, extinguishing them.

Bo'sun Bill saw that act just in time to think of something on his own account.

That big, powerful tar grabbed up the chest that had caused all the trouble.

"Scrap out of here, Bill!" uttered Tod, then ducked and darted between two policemen in the dark.

Thud! Bill had brought that chest down on the head of some hapless fellow.

"Gangway!" roared the sailor, as he caught at the fallen man's sword and raised it over his head.

Tod, himself, had lain hold of an enemy's wrist and had twisted the weapon from his hand.

Now the two fought their way silently through the crowd in the dark.

What might have been looked for happened.

Some of the Turkish policemen mistook others for foes.

The clang of steel was all over the big room.

"Lights, landlord! Lights, on your life!" bawled Turba, hoarsely.

But Tod and Bo'sun Bill, by this time, were out on the landing.

Unhindered, they charged down the stairs.

And Bo'sun Bill still had the chest.

They dashed out into the street.

Here an odd sight met their startled gaze.

Phil, left to two policemen who were expected to butcher him, had ducked under and wrested the sword from the nearer cavass.

Now young Granger was backed against the wall, savagely defending himself.

Yet the American boy, unused to the sword as a weapon, was about to be cut down by a more skilled swordsman.

Chunk! Bo'sun Bill fairly hurled the chest at the assailant, striking him on the head and felling him.

"You get, before I make buzzard's meat of you!" roared Tod, sighting his pistol at the other cavass.

Though that fellow didn't understand the words, he knew the gesture! His long legs carried him swiftly to safety.

"Keep the sword, Phil, and race!" panted Tod, setting the route and sprinting ahead.

They were around the first corner ere Turba's men, piling down from upstairs, had reached the street.

"Now, let me lead the way," panted Phil, running up alongside his chum. "I know where the carriages are."

"You've got them all right, then?"

"Waiting!"

"Thank heaven!"

"Expect any more torpedo boats?" queried Bo'sun Bill, tagging alongside as they ran.

"What?"

"Cops!"

"If we meet any more we're done for!"

"Don't need these here swords, then, do we, cap'n?" questioned Bill. "They look queer."

"Lay them here," advised Tod, halting and laying his own softly on a doorstep.

Ridded of the tell-tale weapons they hurried on, though no longer at a run, for there were no sounds of pursuit behind.

"We've got them off the track for a few minutes," Tod quivered. "Thank heaven, to-night, for the queer, crooked, many streets of Constantinople. These streets are bully to lose cops in!"

"Carriages are around the next corner," chuckled Phil.

In a jiffy they came upon two hacks, to each of which was hitched a pair of passably good horses.

"The last leg of the race," uttered Tod, as they glided toward the two carriages.

"Here," whispered Phil, halting beside one of the carriages, and catching at his friend's sleeve. "I want you to ride with Dad and Flo."

"Why?"

"Because you're the head and brains of this whole job. If they get into trouble, I'd rather have you with 'em."

"All right, then," nodded Tod. "But tell Bill to put the chest in here, and you give me the key. We'll empty that chest and get rid of it at the first chance."

Phil handed over the key. Bill came up with the chest.

"Good evening, Mr. and Miss Granger," greeted our hero, opening the cab door and glancing inside, as if this were to be an ordinary pleasure drive. "I understand that I'm billed to ride with you. I hope it will be agreeable."

"Come in, our most serviceable friend," murmured Mr. Granger, faintly.

Flo seemed unable to speak, but, as Tod entered and took the front seat, facing them, she leaned forward, clasping our hero's hand tightly.

Bill placed the chest inside, then departed after Phil.

Their cab could be heard following as the three ahead started.

"I understand," murmured Mr. Granger, weakly, "that you have secured the return of the chest, though with much difficulty. I learn, also, that we are forced to leave Constantinople in a hurried and irregular way in order to prevent unpleasant complications."

He did not know the real story. If he had, the excitement of this night drive might have been enough to kill him.

"Lean back, papa; rest your head on my shoulder and try to doze," coaxed the girl.

Tod leaned back, and, as soon as he could make out the faces in the dark, he kept his eyes mostly on the girl, once in a while looking toward Mr. Granger.

"Tell this young man," murmured her father, "that we shall not be slow to reward him for all his much-needed service to us."

Flo repeated the words in a louder voice, smiling toward our hero.

The horses were traveling at a good pace, though not hurriedly.

Within the first half-mile they came to a mosque, or Mohammedan temple.

"Halt!" rang a voice that made Tod's heart jump and his pulses throb.

But he got out slowly, smilingly, as the horses stopped.

An officer and six policemen regarded them with evident pleasure.

"We have just received orders to stop all foreigners to-night," announced the officer, looking keenly at Tod.

"Not the least objection," smiled our hero. "It will be only for a moment."

"You seemed to be trying to leave Constantinople?"

"Yes."

"Then, by our orders, we must hold you until we have received further orders."

"Why, that would be at your peril, I suppose," smiled Tod, good-humoredly.

His hand went to an inside pocket and drew out the envelope handed him by Korisha.

"I'll light matches for you, if you wish, so that you may read this paper," suggested Tod, good-humoredly.

Wondering, the officer received the document. He unfolded it as Tod lighted a match.

This was what the officer read:

"Herr Weissman, and his party of four others, including one young woman, are traveling under the Sultan's eye. They are in the special service of the Sultan. All officers of the government are commanded to help Herr Weissman and his party on their way, and will in no way hinder their journey, by order of the Sultan."

This passport carried the proper signatures and the necessary seals.

"It looks regular, in every way," announced the officer, in a more courteous tone.

"Why, of course it's regular," smiled Tod. "Still, if you see fit to take the risk of detaining us, as you suggested——"

"No, no, no!" replied the officer, salaaming low. "The Sultan's orders! If you are in the Sultan's eye then I much regret that I have hindered you this long."

"You did your duty. We are not offended," Tod answered, generously. "Good night."

He stepped back into the carriage, which moved forward, leaving behind a salaaming police official.

A mile onward, they were halted a second time. They

were halted for the third time just as they left the city to enter the open country along the shores of the Bosphorus.

"It works like a charm—this paper forged by Korisha," smiled the boy, at last.

"Forged?" repeated Mr. Granger.

"Why, yes; the paper is a little irregular, at least," Tod admitted, blandly. "However, that will make little difference, as we never want to see Turkey again."

"No; I have had enough of the country," sighed Mr. Granger.

"After to-night it's any place but Turkey for ours," chanted Tod, gaily.

Flo laughed softly. All through this trying ride she had remained all but silent, though highly cheerful.

She asked no questions, made no remarks.

"She's a dandy, all-around American girl," thought Tod, enthusiastically.

They were driving over a badly-kept country road now, passing, every now and then, the country residence of some merchant or official of Constantinople.

After going a couple miles or more Tod suddenly became interested in something outside the carriage.

He leaned forward, thrusting his head out of the window, listening intently.

Flo watched him, but asked no questions.

"Hold on, driver! Stop!" called Tod, in Arabic.

He sprang out, stopped the driver following, and went to the window of the other cab.

"Hear the beat of horses' hoofs behind us, down the road?" he murmured.

"Thunder! I think I do," gasped Phil.

In a moment more there could be no mistake about that sound.

"I hear somethin' a jinglin', too," observed Bo'sun Bill.

"Only the sabres of the cavalry," Tod returned, grimly.

"Blazes!" gasped Phil.

"It can't be anything else," insisted our hero. "Cavalry after us. Their horses will travel further than these poor nags."

"If it's no use to try to escape," muttered Phil, grimly, desperately, as he stepped out, "then we've got to remember that we have Flo with us. We must go down, fighting for her safety."

"Under the circumstances it will be a heap better to run," remarked Tod, drily. "Come on."

The will and other papers of value had already been taken from the chest, which had been pitched over a hedge a mile back.

"Mr. Granger, we may have to walk a little now," our hero informed the sick man.

Then, of the driver, Tod asked:

"My man, isn't that cavalry approaching?"

"It must be, effendi," replied the Turk.

"It is the escort the government promised us, then," Tod declared, coolly. "Your horses need rest. We will

wait for the escort. And, while we are waiting, we will walk a bit."

Taking the cue from Tod, they strolled leisurely along until they had left the cab behind in the darkness.

Just at this point the country was lonely, there being no houses close at hand.

"The cavalry are fast catching up," muttered Phil, listening.

"And we're out of sight of the hack drivers," returned Tod. "To your left."

They hurried, now, across a field where the crop of corn was standing.

"Into the middle of this stuff, and wait. It's the best we can do," Tod declared, in a low voice. "Don't answer—no matter what calls you hear."

"You seem to be going back," observed Phil, curiously.

"I'm going to try to get near enough to hear what's said by the commander of the cavalry."

Tod stole away again in the darkness, returning to the cabs by another route.

While still, as he judged, out of sight, he crouched close to the ground, going through a field of rye as stealthily as he could.

He succeeded in gaining a position less than a hundred feet from one of the carriages.

With all the care in the world he stretched himself flat in the rye, taking pains that none of the rye near him was trodden down.

As for the cavalry, that was now less than a quarter of a mile away, coming onward at a steady trot.

In a few moments fully a hundred horsemen dashed up and reined in close to the carriages.

Then rang the captain's voice, sharply:

"Fellows, have you been aiding in the escape of some accursed foreigners?"

"Germans. They had their passports," replied one of the drivers.

"An old man, ill, a sailor, two boys and a girl?" eagerly queried another voice that made Tod Eastman tingle.

It was Ali Deba who spoke.

"Even so," replied one of the drivers. "They traveled on the errand of the Sultan himself."

"Fools!" roared Ali Deba. "The Sultan's business, indeed."

"And who are you that disputes?"

"Ali Deba, the Sultan's Minister of Revenues."

In a twinkling the drivers were down off their boxes, salaaming in consternation.

"Fools, where have they gone?" thundered Ali Deba. "Speak fast, for our heads are in peril!"

"The accursed foreigners," replied one of the drivers, "left our carriages and went ahead in the darkness. I have not seen them since."

"Your excellency, you mustn't let them escape you," cried another voice, that of one torn by anxiety.

"Oho!" muttered eavesdropping Tod. "Dick Hudson on the job, too!"

"They shall not escape. They can't," sneered Ali Deba.

"And I hope your excellency does not forget what I said about the beauty of the American girl," hinted Hudson, craftily. "That girl's beauty would fit her for a pasha's harem. She would be the fit wife for any but the Sultan himself."

"We shall have a look at the girl," promised Ali Deba, laughing roughly. "If she be as beautiful as you say——"

Tod Eastman shook with disgust and rage.

For Flo Granger, dragged away from the protection of her friends, to be forced to become the wife of one of these Turkish officials, was the worst kind of a fate.

"It would be more merciful to kill the poor girl with this pistol!" shuddered the American boy.

Ali Deba's voice was sounding in rapid command.

The cavalry detachment was being broken up into small parties to scout and search in many directions.

"The accursed Americans cannot escape us to-night," announced Ali Deba, again.

CHAPTER XI.

BEFORE THE TURKS' SEARCHLIGHT.

The hack drivers had been forced to go ahead with the cavalry as guides.

Ali Deba, dismounting, paced up and down the road with Dick Hudson.

"Nothing doing here for me," murmured Tod. "Gracious! I wonder if I can get out without being caught. If I can, I know what's to be done!"

He tried a stealthy, backward wriggle of a foot or two, accomplishing it without noise.

Then he gained another yard.

After what seemed ages he felt that he was far enough back from the road to chance rising.

Now he glided swiftly back through the field, though he halted now and then to learn whether pursurers were near.

"Thank heaven!" he murmured, when he again came in sight of the corn-field.

He listened, but could hear no sound of pursuit in that direction.

"Still, there may be soft prowlers," he muttered. "Oh, for a look at the Turkish coast, ten miles in the distance!"

He reached the edge of the cornfield, then started softly through the maze of standing stalks.

Ere long he came upon his party, all crouched on the ground save Bo'sun Bill.

There was a hurried, whispered, agitated conference.

"We can't go further down the road," announced Tod, at last. "We can't stay where we are, for daylight may show enough tracks to lead the enemy to us. Is there anything for us but to strike southward for the Bosphorus?"

"And even then——?" questioned Phil.

"Even at the Bosphorus," Tod replied, "we must trust all to chance. Going to the shore is simply better than doing nothing. But, with all the ships that leave Turkey

through the narrow strait of the Bosphorus, it seems as if there should be one chance of getting away on a friendly ship."

The clank of sabres up on the roadway decided Mr. Granger.

"You're right, Eastman. It's the only chance of any kind," affirmed the old man, huskily. "And I'm afraid that to-night's affair is far more serious than any of you have allowed me to guess."

"Walk ahead with your father, Phil," begged Tod. "I'll give your sister my arm through this grain."

Bo'sun Bill lingered at the rear of all, that he might be a barrier of power and strength in case of suddenly successful pursuit.

In as few words as he could Tod told the girl what he had overhead near the roadside.

At the mention of a harem Flo shuddered.

"I'd sooner die, Mr. Eastman," she whispered, tremulously, "than be forced to become the wife of some odious Turk. If they overtake us, will you promise to shoot me before they can seize me?"

Tod shivered.

"You must promise!" she urged, looking appealingly into his eyes.

"Well, yes, then, I do promise," groaned the boy. "But, oh, Lord, I hope they don't catch sight of you!"

Then he stole forward to caution Phil, who was leading the party out of the standing corn toward a road that ran shoreward.

"We must keep to the fields, old fellow," our hero remonstrated. "Every road is likely to swarm with men. We'll be in huge luck if we don't run into the enemy in the fields, as well."

They passed out of this cornfield, and into another.

At the edge of the second field, just as they were leaving it, Phil and his father halted abruptly.

There were figures moving ahead, and spurs faintly jangling.

"Just what I feared," gasped Tod. "The cavalry officers have dismounted some of their men."

"What'll we do?"

"Remain here, crouch and keep quiet."

Within a minute the nearby Turkish soldiers had disappeared out of reach of eye or ear.

"Now, we'd better try to get forward," quaked Tod. "We don't know how soon these fields will be searched."

"Remember your promise, and keep by me," whispered the girl in his ear.

Ted, who had drawn his revolver that he might have it in instant readiness for the enemy, if encountered suddenly, shuddered and thrust his weapon back in a pocket.

"Do you repeat your promise?" whispered the girl, bravely.

"No!" he answered, firmly enough to satisfy her.

A rye-field stood next in their way.

"Ugh!" shivered Tod. "We can't get through this with-

out treading down the standing grain. I don't know but we'd better try the road for a bit of the way."

Bill silently slipped into the lead at that. When part way to the road he silently stopped and held up a hand.

"Wait here, you three," whispered Tod, leaving the Grangers at stock-still. Our hero stole forward.

"Can you make that fellow out, standing over there by the road?" whispered Bill.

"I'm not sure."

"Then that's where my sailor's eyes beat your lubber's eyes. That dark something over there, cap'n, is a Turkish soldier."

"Wait here, then," begged Tod.

Our hero stole forward, drawing his revolver as he went. He soon came within easy sight of the soldier.

But, by this time, our hero was flat on the ground, moving forward more like a snake than like a human being.

As Eastman moved forward he could hear the soldier yawning.

Plainly, though he had been stationed here, the Turk had no idea that he would espy the fugitive.

Lighting a cigarette, the soldier turned his back on the field.

An unlucky move, for Tod, creeping up behind him, suddenly rose and fell upon the fellow.

Down they went, struggling, but Eastman's hands were gripped tightly around the Turk's throat.

There could be but one answer to such a situation as that. Tod soon had his unknown foe reduced almost to unconsciousness.

"Now, let me do some work on him, cap'n," murmured Bo'sun Bill, who had stolen swiftly forward.

Though the soldier was barely conscious, and must have realized what was going on, he made no resistance when Bill whipped a cord out of his hip pocket and began to tie the fellow.

That done, Bill plugged one of his own big red handkerchiefs in between the fellow's jaws and tied it there.

"It's a lucky find in the way of fightin' tools, cap'n," grinned the sailor, as he picked up the soldier's arms.

These consisted of a carbine, pistol and sabre.

"We could do some fighting, now, if we were put to it," smiled Tod. "Wait. I'm going back for the others."

The Grangers were now soon on the spot.

From here on they traveled down the road, but Bo'sun Bill was well in the lead, with the carbine, employing his sea-trained eyes in the dark.

But at last he came gliding back.

"I don't s'pose ye can see that gleam just ahead," he observed. "It's water."

"The Bosphorus!" Tod ejaculated.

"If it ain't, it ought to be," replied the tar, gravely. "It's down just where the Bosphorus is on the map."

Within three minutes they were treading a rock-strewn beach at the edge of the strait.

There was not a house near, but there was a tiny grove in

which the fugitives tried to hide themselves from chance observation by prowling troopers.

"We've got everything but a craft between us and that water," announced Tod, cheerily. "It ought not to be so hard to find that."

"If we could get hold of a sizeable craft," glowed the tar, "with a sharp bow, slim hull and big spread of canvas!"

"We can hunt, anyway," replied Tod.

"Cap'n, ye ain't heavy on sailing, are ye?"

"No; why?"

"You stay here, cap, and look after the party. If there's a craft within a mile of here, either way, I'll have it here in racing time!"

With a hurried salute, and still gripping the carbine, Bill stole off in the darkness.

"What would we do without him?" murmured Phil.

"More especially what would we do without Mr. Eastman?" asked Flo, quietly.

"We couldn't have done anything without them both," Phil acknowledged.

"You're still the leader," Flo murmured, looking into Tod's eyes.

"Until we get afloat," smiled the boy. "Then I guess we'll show sound judgment by letting Bill command."

"We may not get afloat. But wherever you are, you're naturally the leader, Mr. Eastman."

Mr. Granger, worn out with the night's drain on his little strength, lay flat on the ground, his eyes closed.

"I think I'd better go a bit in from shore, and watch against troopers," declared Phil.

With the captured trooper's sabre and pistol he stole away in the dark.

"Now, please don't you discover an errand, Mr. Eastman," smiled Flo.

"I've found mine—right here," Tod declared, promptly.

"Somehow," murmured the girl, "I feel that our night of torment is not to go for naught."

"If I thought it was," rejoined young Eastman, "I believe I'd be ready to die from sheer disgust. I can't realize all that we've been through in the last two days."

"And all that you've suffered on our account," murmured the girl.

"Suffered?" asked Tod, softly. He looked into the girl's eyes, then looked away again.

"I reckon Americans can't live without some excitement," he remarked drily.

"Surely, you've had enough to last you a life time!"

"So I feel now," Tod admitted, honestly. "But, if I get out of this scrape, probably it'll be only to get into some other."

"If I reach home," declared the girl, "I'm not sure I shall ever want to leave the United States again."

"What's that?" whispered Tod, with sudden eagerness. He was straining, looking forward across the water.

Some kind of craft was moving out there, heading in toward their spot at that.

The craft, latteen rigged, seemed to be some fifty feet in length.

"It must be Bill, of course," murmured the boy.

It was Bill, as a cautious hail, two minutes later, established.

Towing astern of the craft was a small boat in which the bo'sun put off hastily.

But, by the time that he reached shore Tod was away in the darkness, gone after Phil.

Bill, able to take but two passengers at a time in his small boat, conveyed Flo and her father out to the larger craft.

"Hang these native craft!" growled Bill, as he sculled back for the boys. "It takes a Christian to build a boat that's made to sail. I'd take my hat off to the heathen that can sail a lanteen, if it wasn't such blame foolishness to have such a rig at all!"

"I guess you'll handle the boat all right, Bill," chuckled Tod, "if Ali Deba doesn't get steam craft on our trail."

There was a sail cabin aboard the larger craft.

In this Flo had established her father.

The boys remained with Bo'sun Bill as he trimmed sail and steered away from the shore.

The girl came out again, as Bill, having put three hundred or more yards between himself and the shore, stood westward.

"Good-bye, Turkey!" murmured the girl, aloud, as she stood between the two boys.

Tod looked at her, then walked away slowly, a mist in his eyes.

"What's wrong?" Phil asked. "You think we can't get away?"

"We can try," smiled Tod, sadly.

"Why can't we get away?"

"Look at your watch?"

Phil did so, and started.

"There's some kind of light astern," suddenly announced Tod.

Bill turned and looked, then seemed interested.

"Masthead light," he remarked, "and high up."

"What does that show?" asked Phil.

"Merchant vessel of some kind," replied the tar.

"Why not a Turkish government boat?"

"If it is," rejoined the salt, "then it must be a battleship. That ere is a pretty big craft. I can make out her green port light now. She's bearing down this way."

Tod turned to the girl.

"If you believe in prayer," he whispered, "steal away by yourself and pray that that may be some friendly skipper's craft."

"Why?" asked the girl, looking suddenly anxious.

"That craft is probably our last chance."

Flo looked at him, caught her breath, then stole up forward.

Bill and the two boys spent much of their time watching the oncoming lights.

"Thunderation!" muttered Tod, suddenly. "There are other lights—search-lights, at that!"

"Two craft with search-lights," muttered Bill, hoarsely. "Small Turkish gunboats—that's what they are! Coming down the Bosphorus behind the big steamer, too!"

Florence soon returned to them. Tod told her honestly what they were looking at and guessing.

But Bill, after much looking, suddenly jammed the tiller over. He brought the boat up into the wind, then veered around, sailing back over his track.

"That was by your leave, cap'n," he observed. "I'm taking the only chance to reach the big chaff before the gunboats range alongside. If the big craft refuses us, we might jest as well sail back to the gunboats."

"The big craft won't refuse us," replied Flo, softly, but with an air of conviction.

Again Tod turned away. Couldn't the girl understand that the gunboats would undoubtedly witness the transfer of passengers, and investigate?

As they drew nearer the gunboats proved to be further astern than had been thought.

"Ship ahoy!" bellowed Bill, as he ran up close.

"Ahoy, there!" came the hail from the bridge.

"Stand by to take on passengers! Ye needn't slow up. Throw us a line. Youngsters, run forrard to catch the line!"

Strangely enough Bill's summons was obeyed. As the big native craft ranged alongside the great tramp steamer a line came swirling down.

The smaller craft, as the steamer slowed down to half-speed, tugged alongside.

As a rope-ladder came, Bill ran nimbly up to deck with Flo in his arms, returning for her father.

On his next trip down the sailor was followed by two sailors, who bore axes.

"Up with ye lads! Last chance for breakfast!" roared Bo'sun Bill.

As soon as the boys were both on the rope ladder Bill and the sailors made chips fly.

They scuttled that Turkish craft, leaping clear of her just before she settled low in the water.

Meanwhile, Tod and the Grangers were answering questions fast to a captain who was surrounded by curious officers and crew.

Boom! came a distant gun, just as Bill scrambled over the rail.

"Now, hang it!" gasped Bill, showing nerves for the first time that night. "That's a Turkish gun."

"It means 'lay to,'" uttered the ship's captain, grimly.

"An' let the Turkish pirates come aboard!" groaned Bo'sun Bill.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

"Well, what can I do?" demanded the captain, a kindly, shrewd-looking elderly man. "The Turkish gun-boats can

overhaul this craft, and they carry artillery into the bargain."

Bells sounded in the engine-room for full speed ahead. That was done by the mate at a hand signal from the captain.

Boom! After a few seconds there was a splash in the water a little ahead of the ship and off to starboard.

"Yes; they mean us," grimaced the captain. "That was a shotted signal."

Reluctantly the skipper signalled the mate for the stopping of headway.

"Cap'n," remonstrated Bill, "ye sure ain't goin' to give up my friends that way!"

"Bo'sun," retorted the captain, "you know as well as I do that it's no use for a tramp freighter to defy the Turkish navy."

Bill looked mutely miserable, his eyes being nearer to tears than they had in years.

"Captain," broke in Tod, appealingly, "are you going to make no effort to save an old man whom the shock of capture will kill? For that matter, the Turks will cut his head off. Are you going to let this young lady be given up? When, this night, I have heard her intending captors declare she is to go to some Turkish official's harem?"

"What's that?" gasped the captain.

He looked at Flo with misty eyes, then suddenly turned and walked away, beckoning to them to follow him.

"They may sink us, or take us as prizes," growled the captain, "but no one shall ever say that Captain Jack Brent let an American woman be taken off his deck by Turks!"

He hurried them into the chart-room, rolled a rug that lay on the floor, and opened an ingeniously built trap-door.

"Down there with you," ordered the captain, gruffly. "I guess there's light enough to see. I'll do my best."

Tod went first down a steep ladder. Mr. Granger followed, then Phil, supporting his sister, and, last of all, staunch old Bo'sun Bill.

Clack! went the trap overhead, and they heard the rug swish into place.

After what seemed an age they heard voices above in the chart-room.

"We suspected that the fugitives were on this vessel," said some one.

"Well, gentlemen, I'll show you every nook on the craft, if you like. But those people aren't aboard in the flesh."

Then there was the sound of retreating footsteps. Ten minutes later the tramp steamer was under way again.

"Come up, now, if you like, folks," called down the jolly voice of Captain Brent. "Maybe you'd like to see the last of Turkey. The sun will be up in fifteen minutes."

That long, fearful night was over, ended in safety.

In less than two hours the passengers were in the Black Sea.

After that, nothing remained but a safe passage to Marseilles, France.

The voyage, combined with success and security, made a well man again of Hiram Granger.

It was some days before he heard the whole story of Tod's wonderful maneuvering that had beaten Ali Deba's plans and foiled the schemes of Dick Hudson.

"Why, it was really the Porte's game that you beat, Tod," cried the old man.

"You mean that the Sultan had a hand in it, sir?"

"Perhaps not a direct hand, but it was anything to keep Ali Deba satisfied, and all the machinery of the Porte was used for our capture. Yes, it was really the Porte's game, played by Ali Deba."

"We certainly traveled under the Sultan's eye," laughed Tod, remembering the forged passports prepared by Korisha.

"I don't believe you'll ever care to go to China, now, to make your living, Tod, my boy," observed Hiram Granger. "You'll do better by sticking to me."

Arrived at Marseilles, Mr. Granger had little difficulty in raising funds through attorneys.

He and his party returned to New York, where the inheritance under the recovered will was soon made secure.

Bill followed the sea for a few more cruises, but he has quit latterly.

He is now a fixture in the home of Tod Eastman, Esq., for Tod remained with Mr. Granger, and has prospered as he deserved to, since he was the founder, in a way, of the family's new fortunes.

Dick Hudson has never been heard from since. He may have perished in Turkey. Angry Ali Deba may know something about that.

Korisha escaped from Turkey, and the Grangers got track of him.

They sent for him, and he is now butler in Tod's household, and Flo gives him most of his orders.

For Flo found her ideal of a hero in that night of terror.

She is now Mrs. Florence Eastman.

THE END.

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